TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

By the same Author.

RECORD OF AN OBSCURE MAN.

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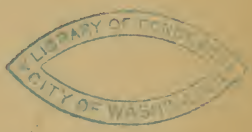
TRAGEDY OF ERRORS. PART II.

BOSTON. TICKNOR AND FIELDS PUBLISHERS.

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

By Margaret Putnam

"Aux plus déshérités le plus d'amour."



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TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

MORNING.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

STANLEY, *a wealthy Southern planter.*
EMMA, *his wife.*
HELEN, *his daughter.*
ALICE, *cousin and adopted sister of Helen's husband.*
HERMANN, *a German refugee, formerly tutor to Helen.*
WOODFORD, *formerly overseer of a plantation in Cuba.*

SLAVES.

HECATE.
PERDITA.
TURPIN.
DORCAS.
THERESA.
EZEKIEL, *a preacher from a neighboring plantation.*
BOAZ, *a preacher.*
ROXANA, *waiting-woman to Mrs. Stanley.*
PHILIP, *body-servant to Mr. Stanley.*
SORDEL, MELAS, MILO, PYRRHUS, } *young men.*
FLORA, CHLOE, BELLA, } *young girls.*
JUBAL, *an old man, formerly slave to Mr. Stanley's mother.*
DAFFY, *Roxana's grandson.*
PETER, *an old man.*

(*Of these slaves, Hecate, Perdita, Turpin, Chloe, and Daffy show no mark of African descent; Theresa is a light quadroon; Ezekiel, Boaz, Milo, Pyrrhus, Jubal, and Peter are black. The rest are brown.*)

Other slaves: field-hands and house-servants.

Scene. — *Belrespiro, — a plantation in one of the Southern States.*

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

MORNING.

SCENE I.

A large Glade. — On the left and in the background, the Forest. — Groups of the Work-people of the Plantation, in holiday dress, are gathered here and there, some chatting, some dancing, others engaged in athletic games. Parties of people are still entering from the right. — In the foreground, towards the left, is a group of men, among whom are MELAS, BOAZ, *and* PYRRHUS. MILO *lies on the grass near them.*

PYRRHUS.

Two days! two holidays!

MELAS.

Two happy days!

PYRRHUS.

To dance and sing!

BOAZ.

To exhort and pray!

MILO.

To sleep in!

PYRRHUS.

Not pale and short, like those we have at Christmas,
But long and broad and sunny!

MELAS.

Good Miss Helen!
Where'er she goes, she takes a blessing with her.
God render it again to her and hers!

PYRRHUS.

What is the time?

BOAZ.

Not six yet.

PYRRHUS.

Almost six!
We lose our day.

MILO.

We lose our night, you mean.
We might have stayed another hour asleep.
To-day 's our own!

PYRRHUS.

To-day and all to-morrow!

MILO.

But 't is good napping here upon the grass,
In the mild morning sunshine, — even better
Than under cover.

PYRRHUS.

But our songs and laughter,
Our merry dances, Father 'Zekiel's preaching,
How will these suit with sleep?

MILO.

Oh, bravely, friend!
My ears stand open, though my eyes be shut.
My soul shall dance and sing and shout with you,
While the contented body takes its rest.

MELAS.

Be happy your own way. To-day is free.

PYRRHUS.

To-day and all to-morrow.

MILO.

But the next day!

PYRRHUS.

Two long days off. We 'll meet it when it comes,
And live through it as through so many others.

BOAZ.

You 'll live through it! Ungrateful that you are!
With such a master, a true gentleman,
That lives and lets live! This is all the thanks
You give for two whole days of idleness:
Only to grumble that they have an end!
Shame! Shame!

PYRRHUS.

Yes, shame, to spend our time in prosing!
What shall we do? How shall our mirth begin?

[*Women enter; among them,* FLORA, CHLOE, BELLA, *and* ROXANA, *who is followed by* DAFFY. *They place themselves in the centre of the foreground. The men suspend their conversation to observe them.* PHILIP *enters, approaches the foreground, and looks on with an air of superiority.*

BELLA, *to Flora.*

How gay you are! Where did these roses come from?
I thought mine pretty; but they 're only real ones.

FLORA.

Where all I have comes from: from kind Miss Helen.
The first ball-dress she had was trimmed with them.
I dressed her; and how beautiful she looked!
Poor dress! it was so fresh that night! so lovely!
And last year, when we took it from the drawer,
It was all changed and flimsy with the damp.

BOAZ, *who has been gradually drawing near them.*

Yes, thus it is, my friends, with earthly pleasures:
A moment fresh and bright, then dull and faded.

CHLOE.

You, Boaz? Ah, how true! These idle girls,
With their gay talk of balls and dress and ribbons,
Turn off the thoughts from death and sacred things.
How is it, Boaz? When I hear the preacher
Discourse and pray, my soul belongs to heaven;
I feel myself already fit to fly.
But afterwards, when I have left the meeting,
Though I would hold me in a state of grace,

The banjo's twang or a rose-colored ribbon
Calls down my heart and I am all this earth's.

BOAZ.

That is the nature of the female heart,
That lightly sways to this or that attraction.

CHLOE.

What shall we do, then? If it is our nature ——

BOAZ.

Be not cast down; for it will be considered.
Wisdom and strength have not been made your portion.
But therefore should each feeble female mind
Choose for itself a wise and strong director.
Those prone to temporal follies should choose one
That has the gift of preaching and expounding;
So that by words both in and out of season
Their souls may still be lifted and sustained.

CHLOE.

How well he talks! what precious words of wisdom!
How did you come by so much learning, Boaz?

ROXANA, *looking at Flora's dress.*

It's well; it's well. You're right to love Miss Helen.
But my Miss Emma had a bigger fortune.

FLORA.

You love the mistress as I love Miss Helen.

ROXANA.

Love her? and who should love her, if I do not?
I took her, when, a little frightened child,
She stood alone there in her father's house.
The nurse that brought her must not stay with her,
For fear the thought of home should stay there too,
The home that she was sick for, the old home.
And was n't it to me she used to tell
How much her sister was more like a mother
Than her own father was a father to her?
When did Miss Helen do as much by you?
Then, when her sister and her sister's all
Went down at sea, who was it fretted with her,
And sat up nights, and told her all the wrong
Sure to be done to poor unmothered girls?
When did you ever that much for Miss Helen?
And now, who is it that she listens to ——

FLORA, *smiling.*

Hecate?

ROXANA, *disdainfully.*

You don't know what you 're saying. Hecate!
How much some people see!

FLORA.

Who 's that, — who 's that, —
Gliding along the margin of the wood? —

[THERESA *enters by a path through the wood on the left.*

It is — it must be — yes, it is Theresa!

CHLOE.

On holidays she has n't shown herself
E'er since her son became a runaway.

FLORA.

She gathers flowers. What should she do with flowers?

DAFFY.

A runaway? What did he run away for?

ROXANA.

Oh, nonsense! nothing! —

[*To Flora and Chloe.*

Talk of something else.
'T is ill to say such things before the children.
Bad acts are catching. Who knows what might happen?

FLORA.

Do you think he 'd never hear it but from her?

PHILIP, *coming forward.*

What are you talking of? Theresa's son?
I know the most about it. I was there.

DAFFY.

How was it? Tell!

[MELAS, PYRRHUS, *and* MILO *join the group in the centre of the foreground.*

PHILIP.

Well, you all know Theresa

Was, in her day, the handsomest and proudest
Of all that walked the earth: proud of her beauty,
Proud of her manners, prouder of her voice,
Proudest of all of her one child, her boy.
Well, I 'll not say but that she had some reason:
Now that he 's dead and gone, I think she had. —
Our master's youngest sister, when she married,
Took that boy off with her to her plantation:
'T was great promotion for him, that it was!
He was to be her coachman. He was dressed
Like any gentleman, and hardly had
A thing to do but go out on the carriage.
He was n't old enough, they thought, to drive:
He was but sixteen, though he looked like twenty.
Well, whether 't was the Devil tempted him,
Or whether 't was the pride his mother gave him, —
At any rate, one morning he was missing.
At first no one believed 't was so; but soon
The truth came out. "To horse and after him!"
So went the word. It was not long in doing. —
Our master was there then, and I was with him. —
They came up with him in an open space
Between two woods, just as it might be here.
He would not yield till they had fired three times;
Nor then. But when he fell all faint with bleeding,
They tied him on a horse to take him home.
He did n't get there, — died upon the way.
We scooped a hole out for him in the swamp
And laid him in.

DAFFY.

In his fine clothes?

PHILIP.

No, no!
The boy left all his handsome things behind him.
He wore the dress of a field-hand. He bought it,
No doubt, with money got from visitors.
He was a handy lad, and his good manners
And cleverness brought him in many presents.
That helped to turn his head.

MELAS.

Yes, that and reading.

BOAZ.

Reading? Ah, that's as may be. There are heads,
As you must know, are strong enough to bear it.
But he was young and light.

PHILIP.

Well, there he lies,
Theresa's pride and darling!

FLORA.

Hush! she comes!
No, — she has stopped. She does not seem to know
Where she is going.

CHLOË.

She can't know, indeed!
'T is the last place where I should think to see her.

FLORA.

Ah, but to-day! She always loved Miss Helen.

CHLOE.

Well, then, she 'd better show her love to her,
And keep within to-day. That face of hers
Would change a wedding to a funeral.

ROXANA.

Ah, poor Theresa! 'T was another story
In times that I remember! Once we thought
It was no holiday, if she were wanting.

PHILIP.

Nor only we. For even when the mistress
Had company, Theresa sang to them.

ROXANA.

She sang, they said, in all the languages.
She had been by and heard the music-lessons
The foreign master gave to Miss Lucretia;
And such a gift she had, that girl, from Nature,
That all she heard she could at once repeat,
Only more perfect and more beautiful.

PHILIP.

The mistress said that she had never heard
At any theatre or opera-house
A voice like hers.

FLORA.

I can remember it.
When quite a child, I used to hear her sing.
It seemed to me as if the heavens opened

And her song bore me upward on its wings.
What would I give to hear that voice once more!

DAFFY.

But I have never heard it. How long is it
Since she gave up her singing?

ROXANA.

Since the day
She heard that news. 'T is now about twelve years.

MELAS.

Twelve years? So long? How did the mistress take it?

ROXANA.

Hard at the first. To hear Theresa sing
Had been her greatest pleasure. Hours and hours
She used to listen, and, when one song ended,
Would quickly say, "Again! — again! — another!"

CHLOE.

Oh, my poor mistress! what a loss it was!

ROXANA.

Her time hung heavy. I have seen her shed
Tears, speaking of that girl's ingratitude.
They tried all means to move her stubbornness.
Nothing would do, and she was let alone.
She does her work as she was used to do, —
Knits and embroiders; sing she can't, or will not.

FLORA.

See her, poor thing! see how she ties up nosegays,
And lets them drop, and then begins again!
Now she stands wondering at herself. — Theresa! —
She comes towards us! She is really coming!
If she would sing! Perhaps, if we should ask her —
This day, this happy day ——

ROXANA.

What! do for you
What even the mistress could not win from her?

FLORA.

Who knows? We can but try. Perhaps she 'll hear us.
We have no power to order; we but beg.

[THERESA *comes near. Her face is wan, but has the remains of great beauty; her look is vague and abstracted, but at moments has in it something tender and beseeching.*

ROXANA.

Good-morning! We are glad ——

FLORA.

To see you here.
Theresa dear, we were just speaking of you.

THERESA.

You might have chosen better.

FLORA.

We were saying

What pleasure it would give us on this day
To hear the voice we used to love so much.

THERESA.

That voice! Ah, when you hear it, dread its tones!
When the dumb speak, it is a time of danger.

FLORA.

Those heavenly tones can only promise good.

THERESA.

You know not what you ask. You will not hear them.

FLORA.

Oh, dear Theresa, why, then, are you here?

THERESA.

Ah, why, indeed? A something in the air
Told me it was a fitting time for me.
Something has happened, — some calamity.
Is there a corpse for me to help lay out?

FLORA.

Wake up, Theresa! No, — you dream. Wake up!
This is the happiest day in all the year.
Your dreams are black, but they are morning dreams,
And go by contraries. Miss Helen comes!
She comes to us for the first time to-day
Since she was married! Think, then, what a pleasure!
Here we shall see her, and shall see the child,
Our little master that will be one day!

Come, then, one song, Theresa! just one song!
Don't look so frozen and so straight before you!
Wake up! look at us! Dear Theresa, once!

ALL, *pressing round Theresa.*

Yes, dear Theresa, only once! one song!

THERESA.

Thanks! thanks! But leave me where I am, good friends!

[*She looks round upon them, then seems to rouse herself with effort and sings. Her voice is at first low and tremulous, but comes out at last clear and full, with a touch of wildness.*

Seek not in me what I have been!
The days are vanished long
When my soul drew the sunshine in,
And breathed it back in song.

Then was no need to ask my lay,
I poured it like the bird;
My heart within kept holiday,
And sang, though no man heard.

The form that led your dance and mirth
Is gathered to the past:
That step no longer treads the earth,
Those lips have smiled their last.

The sleepers underneath the ground
In their still bed are blest:

There are, who, with the living found,
Know death without its rest.

I do not ask God's curse on those
Who wrought this utter woe;
I grudge them not the heart's repose
They could not let me know.

But ask me not to share again
Their sorrow or their weal!
These bring me neither joy nor pain:
I have forgot to feel.

Two only thoughts, in its despair,
My mind unfaded keeps:
That burial without a prayer!
That grave where no one weeps!

[*Theresa goes. The others remain a few moments silent, watching her until she disappears in the forest.*

CHLOE, *to Flora.*

What have you done, unlucky girl! That song!
And that must be the first we hear to-day!
'T will bring no blessing on the baby's cradle.
I must go off. The day is spoiled for me.
It seems as if a cloud had hid the sun.

FLORA.

No, — stay! See there! it shines as bright as ever.
I, too, felt chilled and stunned; but now 't is past.

CHLOE.

Well, take your mirth out. I will go and pray.

FLORA.

Oh, what a pity! What did bring her here?
And what could make me urge her so to sing? —
[*To Chloe, who is going slowly away.*
Come back! You can't be so unkind! Come back!

CHLOE, *returning.*

Only to please you, then. My heart 's not here.

FLORA.

Oh, here comes Sordel! —
[*To Sordel, who enters.*
Have you something new?
You look as if you had a song to sing us.
'T will not be gay, I know, — it never is, —
But only gently sad: that does no harm.
Your mournful lays I can support; — but *hers!*

SORDEL.

Whose, then?

FLORA.

Oh, do not ask! Begin and sing.
We had expected you. We all are met
On purpose here. We like your songs the best.

ALL.

A song! a song!

FLORA.

Soft, sweet, and not *too* sad!

SORDEL *sings, accompanying himself on a kind of rude guitar.*

She went, my life's one treasure;
She will not come again!
She went to ease and pleasure:
I stayed to toil and pain!

I might have known me better,
Dark, sullen, rude, — and she!
No, they could not have let her
Belong to one like me!

And yet not to me only
Love this delusion brought.
Oh, how my life were lonely,
If not for that one thought!

In vain the wealth and splendor!
Those soft eyes watch and pine.
I feel their long gaze render
The love, the grief in mine.

In vain the proud caressing
She dares not quite gainsay
Her hand returns the pressing
Of a hand that 's far away!

[*They applaud. Sordel withdraws, and, seating himself under a tree, tunes his instrument.*

VOICES, *in another part of the glade, shout.*

He comes! he comes! Ezekiel the preacher!

[EZEKIEL *enters by a path through the forest, on the left.*

PHILIP.

Ezekiel here? How will that please the master?
Preacher Ezekiel is n't too well looked on.
Who bade him here?

PYRRHUS.

He was n't bidden; he came.

PHILIP.

No, he was bidden here. How else could he
Have known that we had holiday to-day?
Had you the master's leave?

PYRRHUS.

He did n't forbid it.
He knows on holidays we must have preaching.

PHILIP.

Yes, but Ezekiel!

MELAS.

Oh, he 'll overlook it.

PHILIP.

I don't know that!

PYRRHUS.

Why, he 's too good a master
To be hard on us only for a sermon.

ROXANA

He 's not of those that go against religion.

PHILIP.

He does n't object to it in moderation.

BOAZ.

Ah, but Ezekiel is not orthodox.
I will myself expound a little later:
I have not been moved yet.

PYRRHUS, *laughing.*

We 're not impatient.

MELAS, *to Pyrrhus.*

No, as you say, he is too good a master
To grudge us the salvation of our souls.

MILO.

He knows, when we are working out salvation,
We only do our other work the better.

PYRRHUS.

And he who has a better world in prospect
Is the more easily content in this.

BOAZ.

Yes, he 's a good man and a wise, our master.

PYRRHUS.

He chooses the best way to keep us faithful.
He has no need to make himself uneasy
As to our hearing this or that. He knows
What we dread most is being sent away.

MILO.

Our dreading it may n't hinder it from coming
To some of us, some day!

PYRRHUS.

Well, leave that now.
What will come will come. We 'll not borrow trouble.

[EZEKIEL *advances slowly, frequently stopped by persons who go out from the different groups to speak to him. He is a tall, well-proportioned man, very black, with finely formed head and regular features. He is distinctly seen, for he towers above the others. A little behind him comes* TURPIN, *a man of middle height, slender, of pale complexion, with black beard and curling black hair. His features are delicately cut, but wear an expression of defiance, displaced now by one of reckless jollity, now of cynical disdain, as he exchanges jests and sarcasms with the gay groups among whom he passes.*

MELAS.

Here is the preacher! Listen, he is speaking!

ROXANA.

Ah, we lost that! But he is coming nearer.

MILO.

He comes too soon. We have not had our fun out.

PYRRHUS.

Oh, he will let us dance. He is not Michael.

MILO.

No, but he is another of the same.

CHLOE.

He will not let us murder our own souls :
That were poor kindness, Father Michael tells us.

MELAS.

But Michael speaks in anger, — he in love.

PYRRHUS.

If he forbid us to enjoy ourselves,
I shan't know what to think. He looks so mild,
Perhaps he will not.

[*As they speak, they go a little way to meet Ezekiel. He returns their salutations with dignity and kindness. The rest of the people have left their sports and gather round to listen to him. He speaks without effort, but in a voice so clear and full that he is heard by all.*

EZEKIEL.

I forbid you nothing.
The grant or the denial of your hearts
Must be your guide. If these speak not for God,
Vain to perform, and vainer to abstain!

MELAS.

Do you condemn us?

EZEKIEL.

God forbid, my brother!
My mission is to win you back to Eden,
Not to repel you with a flaming sword.

PYRRHUS.

We want to come to heaven, if we can;
But here we have one day of pleasure sure.
If we lose this, and yet get nothing for it!

MILO.

How can we know, that, even if we get there,
It won't be there the same almost as here?
We are poor ignorant and simple creatures,
And, as we die, so we wake up again.
Will not the great, the learned, and the wise
Have all their places higher there than we?
What pleasure shall we have to sit in heaven,
And be forever there, as here, the lowest?

[DORCAS *enters: a small, meagre, brown woman, with wrinkled skin, and large black eyes, whose common expression is that of craft and restless suspicion, but which at times kindle with a wild gleam. She stands listening somewhat apart from the rest, who do not notice her.*

MELAS.

Preacher Ezekiel, I have had that thought
More times than once. How, if we must wake up

The same we fell asleep, shall we be able
To hold our heads up, when we get to heaven,
Among so many great and learned people?
I think much on the other world; I long
To have my portion there among the good.
But will it, can it, be a heaven to me,
Where there 's a higher and lower, as there is here?

EZEKIEL.

There is a higher and lower; yet not as here.
Have you not heard the gospel, that you know not
The last shall there be first, the first be last?
Those who have suffered most shall know most joy,
Who have borne most reproach be most exalted.
You never heard that tale in Scripture told,
How 't was with Dives in the other world, —
The proud rich man, who in his earthly life
Had never known what hunger was nor thirst?

MILO.

I don't know that I recollect that story.

BOAZ.

Not know that story? Oh, what ignorance!

EZEKIEL.

You never heard of Dives, the rich man, —
How splendidly he lived, how high he feasted?

VOICES.

We 've heard of him. But tell! tell all about him!

EZEKIEL.

His spacious halls, even in summer heats,
Were cool and fresh, with their white marble floors,
Their dripping fountains of sweet-perfumed water,
And spreading fans, that, hung on golden cords,
And gently moved by hands of unseen slaves,
Gave evening breezes in the stillest noon.
At night a soft and silk-hung bed received him.
Sweet music cheated to the light repose
That was a pleasure only, not a want.
How rich his table was I need not tell you, —
What meats, what sugared dishes, and what wines, —
Wines cooled with ice brilliant and hard as diamonds!
When he had guests, — and that was every day,
And once a week at least a splendid banquet, —
They never ate off anything but gold;
And each guest had a servant to himself,
That stood behind his chair and helped but him.
Dives, be sure, had troops on troops of servants.

PYRRHUS.

Oh, but what luck to have had such a master!

EZEKIEL.

Well, the time came that he must leave all this.
He went to sleep one night in his cool room,
Slaves fanned him, music lulled him, all as usual.
He had not said his prayers: of that be certain.
What should he pray for? He had all already.
He slept, then, as I said; but suddenly

He finds himself out of his costly bed,
Out of his splendid room, and through the air
Whirling away. "Oh, what a dream!" he thinks;
"If I could only wake!" But on he whirls
Swift as a musket-ball, until, at last,
Giddy and breathless, he brings up in hell.
He did n't know 't was hell at first: or rather,
He did n't know 't by name; he felt what 't was.
A glare, as of ten thousand thousand torches,
Struck on his eyes; in vain he held them shut;
The glare was there within as 't was without.
He saw no sun nor blaze the light could come from;
It seemed the air itself was all aglow.
Then came the little creeping, unseen flames,
Wound themselves round him, twining up and up,
Till the whole surface of his naked soul
Was wreathed with fire, that like the fire of fever
Burned, parched, and anguished, but without consuming.

VOICES *interrupt, chanting.*

Oh, dreadful land! 'T is easier here to bear
The hottest torments of the noontide glare!

OTHER VOICES.

Oh, let us suffer here, so that we come not there!

EZEKIEL.

When he could see about him in that blaze,
He looked from side to side to seek for help;
And presently, one after one, appeared

Friends he had seen, with splendid funerals,
Borne to lie down to rest in marble tombs.
They looked at him, but did not say him welcome.
Then he remembered all that had been told him
Of death and of the reckoning after death.
He knew that he was dead and was in hell.
Lifting his eyes up then in his despair,
He saw far off, lying in cool, blue space,
The happy habitations of the chosen.
To the soul's senses distance is no hindrance.
It was so far that in a thousand years
A bird could not have flown from him to them;
And yet he seemed to hear the waving trees,
The gentle murmur of the silver waters,
The music toning from the heavenly harps.
He saw the blessed walking in white raiment;
He saw how kind they smiled upon each other,
Like loving brothers in their father's house.

VOICES *break in.*

When shall we come to thee, O land of bliss?

OTHER VOICES.

To win that lovely world, well may we pine in this!

EZEKIEL.

But all the faces there were strange to him:
In vain he sought some old friend or relation,
That might be brought to speak a word for him;
Until, at last, searching with desperate eyes,

He found a face to which memory answered, "Yes!" —
But where beheld, at first it could not tell him.
Slowly the where, the when, came back to him.
That face, so beautiful, so still, so noble,
Was it the face of the despisèd beggar,
Whose bleeding sores and face awry with pain
Disgusted him, as he passed out his gate
In his carriage, mornings? It was Lazarus!
This was a poor old man who 'd been a servant;
But whether 't was with Dives or another,
I did not rightly hear, and cannot tell you.

BOAZ, *aside.*

He cannot read! He 's only *heard!* I thought so!
A pretty fellow he to be a preacher!

EZEKIEL.

But he had been a servant, and a good one.
If he could but have kept off growing old,
He would have done so, for his master's sake.
But the strong limbs grew feeble, the quick hands
Awkward and slow; and so a younger man
Must do his work; there was no place for him.
His master then gave him his liberty.

VOICES.

Gave him his liberty? Ah, that was hard!

EZEKIEL.

A year or two he just got work enough

To keep along; but soon no one would hire him
Even for his keep, he was so sick and feeble;
He got more blows than coppers or than food.
When strength was none and work was none, he sat him
Down on a stone not far from Dives' gate,
And waited that the scornful passers-by
Should throw him now and then a bit of money.
There all day long he sat; sometimes he got one,
And some days none; but never a kind word
Nor a kind look was his, by any chance:
Only the dogs sometimes made friends with him.
He was translated on the very night
That Dives left his soft and curtained bed
For the last time. The old man had that day
Received no alms. He stretched his feeble body,
When the night fell, upon the cold, hard stone,
But his soul raised itself to God in prayer.
Grateful he prayed, with heart o'erflowed with love.
He thanked his Maker for the inward light
That overpowered the outward gloom, — for strength
Divinely sent, which made the body's weakness
Appear no evil more. As thus he prayed,
And more and more his soul strove up to God,
Sudden it seemed to disengage itself:
It rose, it soared, it found itself in heaven! —
This was the face that Dives knew again:
"Lazarus himself!" he said; and then he wished
That the last time he passed the beggar by
He 'd happened to have given him a cent.
Too late for that! But still, when he considered

What honor it would be for Lazarus
To do a favor to a man like him,
He thought he 'd risk the making a request.
So, for the first time, he sent up a prayer:
He begged that Lazarus might come to him
And bring him down only a drop of water
To cool his tongue. Oh, but his thirst was fearful!
Soon as the wish was thought, 't was heard in heaven,
And back the answer came as swift again:
"Thou hadst thy good things in the earthly life,
And Lazarus his evil. It is finished.
A gulf is now forever set between you.
Thou canst not come to him, nor he to thee!"

FLORA.

Ah, me! I almost fear we are too happy!

DORCAS, *chuckling to herself.*

He that when here would not have looked at water! —
That 's what Ezekiel's preaching is! It suits me!

MILO.

We shall be first there! 'T don't seem possible!

ROXANA.

Ah, that 's a comfortable Scripture doctrine!

TURPIN.

What fun it must have been to that old fellow!
If I could but look down from Paradise,

And hear my master bawling up from Tophet,
"*A glass of water, boy!*" I'd give up dancing
And drinking, and I'd just stick close to praying
Through my whole life, if it could come to that.
To see him shake his fists and rage and tear,
While I sit solemn there and look at him,
Safe out of reach! Ah, that would pay him off!

FLORA.

What shocking words! You are not of our people,
But you have been let come to share our pleasure;
And this is all your gratitude! For shame!

TURPIN.

I was n't let come; I 've got to pay for it.
I was sent on errand to another place,
But made off here instead. The punishment,
I dare say, would have caught me all the same
For something else that was n't better worth it.

DORCAS, *still standing apart.*

And those who take their vengeance in this world,
Will they enjoy it in the next again?
If not, I've overreached myself. No, no!
A bird in the hand! Dorcas, when you saw *her*
Set up for sale on the same block with you,
You had your heaven, if you ne'er have another!

FLORA.

I can't but think 't was hard on Lazarus,
Though that old master had been no good man,

Not to be able just to comfort him
With one poor drop of water, when he asked it.
'T is likely, though, they did n't let Lazarus hear him.
If it were possible — of course it is not —
But just suppose that I could be in heaven,
And poor Miss Helen pining down — below there;
If she signed to me for a glass of water,
I 'd give it her, though I lost heaven for it.

MELAS.

The Scripture saith that *hardly shall a rich man*
Enter the kingdom. What rich men will be there?

EZEKIEL.

There will be those that have been poor in spirit,
Remaining God's true children, not disowning
Their brotherhood with any He hath made.
There will be those that in this life have borne
An aching heart beneath the costly dress.
For there are found, even in stately houses,
Those that are brought to God through suffering:
I 've seen such near, and looked upon their lives.
We need not grudge to offer them the hand;
They are of us, and well may share our heaven.

DORCAS, *in a smothered voice, with clenched hands.*

Not one of them! not one of them! not one!

FLORA.

Through suffering! And our Miss Helen, then?
'T would be no heaven to me where she was not!

MELAS.

We know by riches men come not to heaven.
But wisdom? learning? that is something else.

BOAZ, *consequentially.*

Wisdom and learning, — yes, that 's different.

MELAS.

We are so ignorant, alas, and simple!

EZEKIEL.

Simple indeed! Why, wisdom, earthly wisdom,
Is the last wealth a man can take to heaven:
More cumbersome it is than bags of gold.
Has not Christ said, "Become as little children,
Or else you cannot enter"? Said not Paul,
"He who is wise with earthly wisdom must
Become a fool, if he would be a Christian?"
I tell you, children, if you miss of heaven,
'T is not your ignorance will keep you out.
And would you know what station God prefers,
And what respect He has for human learning?
Inquire where Christ was born, and what his breeding.
Who were his learned tutors? In what college
Got he the wisdom that redeemed the world?
He might have had his choice; he might have come
As the most rich and learned of the earth,
And so have had the great men and the wise men
All following him, proud to be his disciples.
That might have tempted one of us, not him.
He chose to come and be a carpenter, —

A carpenter, — why, just as I 'm a blacksmith!
A carpenter, just like your Pyrrhus there!
And when the time came to go out and preach,
Whom did he choose to aid him in his work?
Who were they whom they call the Twelve Apostles?
There was n't a gentleman among them all!
Poor fishermen and such! And for their learning, —

[*Looking round him and stretching out his arms.*

The books they read are open still to us.

[*Looking upward devoutly.*

The source of wisdom, whence their spirits drank,
Is not yet dry. It flows for him that seeks it.

BOAZ.

As if Saint Peter had not been a bishop! —

[*Aside to Philip.*

I told you that he was not orthodox.

PHILIP.

Not orthodox? It 's quite ill-bred and low.
I 'm off from this. I like genteeler preaching.

[*Goes.*

CHLOE.

Really, I 'd rather they 'd been gentlemen!

EZEKIEL, *after a pause.*

Let us not ask about the fate of others.
To their own master let them stand or fall.
We have our own salvation to work out. —

[*Pauses again, then proceeds.*

Yes, let the rich and mighty have their kingdom,

The kingdom of this earth. We grudge them not
Their transient bliss. But we, the heirs of light,
We upon whom the saving mark is set,
The mark that men interpret *Want and Shame*,
But that to angel eyes reads *Wealth and Glory*,
Shall we renounce our promised heritage?
If those to whom this earth is given in portion
Make all they can of it, and lose no ray
Of their short sunshine, who can wonder at them?
This earth is fair, is wondrous fair; its pleasures
Sweet to the sense of man. And he who stands
Beside their flood upon the placid shore,
And feels their rippling billows woo his feet
With soft, decoying touch, how shall he choose
But lose himself into the treacherous tide,
And rise and sink and revel with its waves?
But we, whose way tends through the weary waste,
Beyond whose sands lies our appointed home,
Shall we stay dallying with the shining pebbles
That haply here and there may strew our path,
And lose from sight the sunlit mountain-tops,
From thought the happy, cool, embosomed valleys,
The shadowing trees, the springs of living water?

VOICES *interrupt.*

Oh, blessed land beyond those mountains hidden!

OTHER VOICES.

Oh, dreary desert stretching out between!

OTHER VOICES.

Oh, earthly joys! so near, and yet forbidden!

OTHER VOICES.

Oh, heavenly pleasures! ours, and yet unseen!

CHORUS OF VOICES.

Hard is our portion in these earthly bowers,
When what is ours is not, and what is is not ours!

EZEKIEL.

Oh, faint not! falter not! From that blest land
Celestial eyes are watching your approach.
Follow with resolute step your dreary path.
With steadfast courage meet the demon hosts
That bar your passage to your promised home.
Unmarked on earth these mean defeats and triumphs;
But there, with each reverse a shadow falls
Over the brightness of angelic faces,
Each victory wakes in heaven one joy the more!

PHILIP *reënters.*

You must all come, — the order has been given, —
And range yourselves each side the avenue.
You must come now, and not delay a minute,
That you may be there when the carriage passes.
Each one must have a red rose in the hand,
Or some bright flower, to make the scene more gay.

FLORA.

Oh, beautiful! that was the mistress' order.
I'll twine some wreaths: that will be prettier still.

PHILIP.

You must be careful not to fright the horses;
And when the carriage has gone by, you must
Move forward in a regular procession,
Until you are assembled on the lawn,
Where all the grass has just been cut on purpose.
And there you all are to receive your portions,
Which you may either carry to your cabins,
Or else bring here and have a general feast.
To each man will be given a double portion;
Women will have a portion and a half;
The men to have a share of spirits beside.

[*The people gather round Ezekiel.*

MILO.

Preacher, you know we must obey the master.

[*Ezekiel assents. Milo goes, and others with him.*

PYRRHUS, *lingering.*

We will come back again and hear the rest.

EZEKIEL.

Go, go, and do your duty. Follow them.

FLORA.

You know we must go out to meet Miss Helen!

EZEKIEL.

She is your mistress, and is kind to you?

FLORA.

Kind as an angel.

EZEKIEL.

Well, well, go and meet her.

MELAS.

But you will come with us and have your share?
Our master always gives the same to strangers
As to his people, on our holidays.

CHLOE.

We shall have meat and bread and lard and sugar.
And then Miss Helen will add something, surely, —
She always does, — sweet cake, or something good.

PYRRHUS.

And every man to have a glass of spirits!
Did you not hear? We 'll have a glorious feast!

EZEKIEL.

I will stay here. I have brought bread with me.
I will refresh myself, and speak again
When you come back. If you are long away,
I will employ the time in praying for you,
That the unusual license of this day
May not become to you a cause of stumbling.

MELAS.

Ezekiel, shall I risk my soul's salvation,
If I accept my share of what is going?

EZEKIEL.

'T were better, if you could abstain, my son.
But if you cannot, take in moderation.

MELAS.

To all temptation you are deaf and blind.

EZEKIEL.

I was not once; but, by God's grace, I 've conquered.

[*They go slowly, Flora stooping from time to time to gather flowers. Dorcas remains standing in her former position, her eyes fixed on Ezekiel, who continues speaking to himself.*

And yet not wholly. I have still my combats, —
No longer of the flesh, but of the spirit.
Oh, if warm prayers and resolute self-denial
Were all God asked for in return for heaven,
Then were it easy; but the lowly mind,
The soft forgiving spirit, how win these?
Love to my God, love to the good I feel;
But the unjust, the cruel, and the base,
Before I recollect that I must love them,
The indignant flash has passed across my brain.
No outward act, no outward word betrays it;
But God has seen it.

Did I wrong, just now,

To grant a half-permission to the people
To cheat themselves awhile with these false pleasures?
I fear I erred in this. Alas! my heart
Is weaker to these children than myself.
But if I erred, so is not theirs the error,
Not theirs the atonement. Let a double fast,
Let work continued through the hours of rest,
Atone my fault. So will my master gain.
I cannot love him, but can toil for him
As if I did. But, O deceitful heart,
Thou dost betray thyself! The heaviest penance
I give myself is to do him a pleasure? —

[*Dorcas approaches slowly.*

It is that wandering-witted woman, Dorcas!
What can she want with me?

DORCAS, *aside.*

He does not know me,
Or thinks that I 've forgotten. And I had.
I did not know him, when I heard him preach.
But later, when the people had all left him,
I saw once more that look upon his face
It wore when —— It was only for an instant,
But there it was! What if I told him all?
Vengeance at least we might enjoy together. —

[*To Ezekiel.*

Ezekiel, you 're a powerful man in speech.
'T is the first time I 've heard you give a sermon.
These foolish people all bepraised you so,
I thought 't was something else. If I had known

What people meant by comfort in religion,
I would have sought it sooner.

EZEKIEL.

Not too late
At the eleventh hour to come to God.

DORCAS.

That 's not the tone I want to hear. Just now
I saw a keen light flashing from your eye
That had more warmth in it than these prim words.
And when you told us about that old beggar,
How his heart crowed when he looked down from heaven,
And saw his master getting his deserts!

EZEKIEL.

I told you that? You know not what you speak.

DORCAS.

Either you said so, or you let us feel so.
My memory is not great for holding words;
I only take the spirit. I don't know
The sense of half I hear, but what I feel
I can't mistake in.

EZEKIEL, *aside.*

What a sharp reproach
This woman brings me! God! and is it so?
Can, then, the hidden, the unconscious feelings

Impart themselves? Can our words take from these
A meaning that we had not thought to give them?
Oh, wretched man, the curse still cleaves to thee! —
[*To Dorcas.*
Is it not rather thy unwholesome heart
That changed the words of health to words of poison?

DORCAS.

It might have been so, — it might well have been so;
But it was not. Thou bear'st in thee unslaked
A thirst that I have known, that I have quenched, —
Yet not entirely. Have I read thee well?
Know'st thou this thirst?

EZEKIEL, *aside.*

Does madness give such power
To read in the heart what the owner does not see there?
God! what a hell wakes in me at her words!
Is it a fiend sent from the abyss to tempt me?
A moment since I almost triumphed. Never
Stood I so near the victory, so near heaven.
And now! —
[*To Dorcas.*
What brings you here to me, strange woman?

DORCAS.

I came for what I see you will not give me:
I came for comfort, hope. I've reached my ends.
But life is short, and mine draws near its close.
I've but one thing to lose, in losing it, —

The joy of looking on a sated vengeance.
For thirty years I've feasted on this joy, —
And now to die! To give up breathing, moving,
Oh, that were nothing! But to give up hating!
Hating with a secure, triumphant hate!
That thought weighs on me, when I think of death.
Your words to-day awakened a new hope.
Tell me, — you are a preacher and must know, —
Can we beyond the grave enjoy our vengeance?
What must we do to earn the right to this?

EZEKIEL, *with effort.*

Woman, this dreadful hope I cannot give you.
With thoughts of vengeance we come not to heaven.
Oh, strive to gain another heart!

DORCAS.

Be silent!
Tell what I ask, or do not speak at all!
I do not want another heart. My own
Is good enough for all I ask of it.
What use to me a heart that knew to love?
I've nothing left to love! This stuff to me!

EZEKIEL, *aside.*

Nothing to love! I will have patience with her. —
[*Aloud.*
How! hast thou nothing left to love? No children?
No brothers? sisters? But perhaps thou art
Not of this country?

DORCAS.

No, — I am from Cuba.

EZEKIEL, *aside.*

From Cuba! She has breathed that air with her! —
[*To Dorcas.*
You know the Spanish tongue?

DORCAS.

I knew it once,
But have forgotten it. For thirty years
And more I have not heard the Spanish spoken.

EZEKIEL.

For forty years I have not heard it spoken, —
[*Aside.*
Or only in my dreams.

DORCAS.

You have forgot it?

EZEKIEL, *aside.*

Forgot the tongue in which *she* spoke, *we* spoke? —
[*To Dorcas.*
This is but idle talk. Unhappy woman,
How gladly would I do thee good! but not
As thou hadst hoped.

DORCAS.

No other way! To take

Away from me the only good I have
Is not to do me good. If in your heaven
There is no place for hate, there 's none for me!
I 'll take my chance and go without religion.
I thought you might have taught one I could learn.
As pay, I would have shared my wealth with you.
But since 't is so, keep your wares; I keep mine.

[*Dorcas goes.*

EZEKIEL.

Poor crazèd thing, how gladly would I save her!
Alas, I am more like to lose myself!
The work of forty years undone at once! —
What form flits by? what tones are in my ears?
Oh, what a spell there was in that word, *Cuba!*
She moves before me, that wild, graceful creature,
With her fantastic gayety, sweet sadness,
Her bursts of passion ravishing and fearful!
For she, like me, was nearer Africa
Than are the most. Our mothers saw the light
First underneath those glowing skies. Our blood
Is tempered only by a single mixture.
But while I bore upon my bronzèd face
The signs that marked me of my mother country,
She wore the impress only on her soul:
Her features, skin, were of her father's race. —
Oh, vanish, beautiful and fearful vision!
Back to the grave where thou hast slept till now!
Moulder where moulder youth and joy and hope!
Dead to my love, live not to my despair! —

O God! thou know'st how I have wished to serve thee!
How striven to come to thee by prayer and penance!
Cast me not off! deny me not thy grace!
Help me to battle these invading demons! —
The help comes not. The tempest is not laid.
I feel that heaven is shut against my prayer.
That prayer itself, perhaps, is a transgression,
Coming from this perturbed, dishallowed heart.
O heart, that didst believe thyself His temple,
How art thou desolate, thou God-abandoned!

MORNING.

SCENE II.

A large room, with windows opening on a long portico, whose columns are wreathed with vines. STANLEY *and* HERMANN *are seated near one of the windows, engaged in conversation.* EMMA *reclines on a sofa. Near her stands a table, on which is a large vase of white flowers. The room is profusely decorated with flowers. A little slave-girl stands near Emma, employed in fanning her. The child lets the fan sink, and turns towards the window.*

EMMA.

How close it is! A storm is coming on!
Where is your fan? The thing is half asleep;
Or else her wits are out upon the green.
There, lay it down, and go and join the rest. —
[*The child goes.*
'T is strange how fond these people are of dancing!
They really have more pleasures far than we.

HERMANN, *to Emma.*

They have less thought. Thought is the foe of pleasure.

STANLEY, *aside.*

If Emma's pleasure had no other foe!

EMMA, *looking at her watch.*

Not nine o'clock yet! Where is Bella? Gone
Off with the rest, no doubt. Give them but dancing,

They forget everything. The only person
That can amuse me now is little Bella.
'T is true she never will know how to sing
Like —— Was not that the sound of distant thunder?

[*She starts up.*

STANLEY, *going to the window.*

Not yet, — not yet. The clouds are gathering.
Yes, we shall have a thunder-storm to-day.
If it will only wait a few hours more,
It may come on and welcome.

EMMA.

Do not say it!

STANLEY.

When we have once our Helen safely housed,
The storm may burst. In fact, we need the rain.

EMMA.

Then let us have the rain without the storm.

HERMANN.

It is not often that our wish is granted
In the same measure or in the same manner
As our mind imaged its fulfilment.

STANLEY.

I
Have but one wish in life and one in death:

That I might have my Helen's blessed presence
While my term holds, and that her loving accents
May be the latest tones that reach my ear!

EMMA, *aside.*

I never saw my husband look so pious!
'T was almost like a prayer!

HERMANN, *aside.*

In this connection
This solemn wish! The Gods avert the omen! —
[*To Stanley.*
Upon a prayer so pure and so restricted
Heaven could not frown. —
[*Musingly.*
And yet perhaps 't is better
To let the eternal circles hold their way,
Nor make them swerve by vow or prayer of ours.

STANLEY, *in his ordinary tone.*

For me, I think I shall not claim much merit
For my forbearance.

HERMANN.

Ah, the human will,
Borne upward on the wings of faith and longing,
Has mighty power. But the audacious effort
Is often punished by its own success.
The compelled Destinies avenge constraint. —

[*Checking himself.*

These are not topics for this happy day.
I am to blame. I know not what came on me.

STANLEY.

Your serious mood gained me. How is it, Doctor?
You are more grave to-day and more sententious
Than even your wont. And yet you, too, love Helen.
You, too, look forward to her coming back ——

HERMANN, *warmly.*

As to the coming back of spring. 'T is true.
Whate'er my heart has left of soft and loving
Belongs to her. I yield but to her father.

[*Stanley and Hermann continue to converse in dumb show.*

EMMA, *aside.*

But to her father? And her mother, then?
The mother has a right to love the best!
'T is strange, — they make no more account of me
Than if I were not! Am I, then, a cipher? —

[*With a more animated expression.*

I love her! She is beautiful, my child!
And yet — and yet — how is it? In my heart
There is a sore place somewhere. Oh, what is it?
Why cannot I feel all the joy that they do?
Where is the glow, the longing of a mother
That listens for the footstep of her child?
My husband's eye has an unusual brightness;
His voice is lower, and his tones more feeling

Than commonly. And even the old Doctor
Has something tender on his rugged features.
How cold my heart is to my only child!
What damps it so? 'T is this depressing climate.
They call it here the South. What can the North be?
My feelings once gushed out so warm, so lively!
My sister-mother, and my real sister,
My darling Agatha! I had no need
To chide myself for want of love to you!
When little Agatha and I were playmates,
How soft my heart was! with what tenderness
Did it give back the love that all things offered!
Now, dull and weak, it has no quickened throb
Even at the coming of my own, own daughter!
Could I but love! could I but love as once!

HERMANN, *to Stanley.*

'T was in this room that I first made acquaintance
With my young pupil. With dejected heart
I came to you that morning, — broken in hope
As well as fortune, brought by force to lay
All my aspirings down and toil for bread.
I thought it shame, — I, not without a name
Among the learned of the elder world, —
I, who once thought my brain should influence
The interests of the future, — thus to stoop
To teach a little girl her A, B, C.

STANLEY.

It was a waste of power. I felt it was.

HERMANN.

I have long ceased to think it such. The man
Who in this world of error and delusion
Has found one unwarped mind, one candid heart,
Has not been luckless. His life is not wasted,
If he have had this mind, this heart to train.
And if his conscience tell him he has left it
In its first candor, has but aided it
In its expansion, not controlled or moulded,
Content to furnish fitting nourishment
And watch unfold the perfect human flower, —
He may forgive himself for many errors,
Forgive the world for many disappointments.

STANLEY.

Doctor, the obligations we are under
To you, for all that you have done for Helen,
Are not to be expressed. You know we feel them.

HERMANN.

The obligations! Do not use that word, —
Else I, too, must begin acknowledgments.
I must recount the many acts of kindness ;
The recognition — not the least of these —
Of the poor exile's claims upon respect;
The confidence; the full appreciation
Of my endeavors, of my system; the —
Perhaps you will permit me to say — friendship
Which for so many years has honored me.

STANLEY, *courteously, but with a slight shade of condescension, not, however, perceived by the Doctor, who is occupied with his own thoughts.*

The friendship of a man like you is honor.

[*With genuine warmth.*

And one who is what you are to my Helen
Claims not regard alone, but gratitude.

HERMANN.

In my new office I did have some merit, —
I'll not deny it. A laborious pedant, —
Professor in a University,
A German University, — encased
In triple armor of scholastic learning,
I laid the cumbrous load at Nature's feet,
Confessed myself her subject, humbled me
To be companion of a little child, —
Learning of her more, daily, than I taught.
There was some strength required for that. I laud me
More for this modesty, this power to value
My life's toil at its worth, than for the works
That gave me fame once, or those other writings
That set a state on fire — phosphoric fire,
That glowed and startled, and then faded out —
And won for me the questionable glories
Of obscure martyrdom. The hardest chains
To break are those of prejudice and custom;
And when our pride has interest to maintain them,
We seldom even try their strength: we wear them
As if they simply were restraints of duty,
And it were sacrilege to find them heavy.

Here is the great support of useless learning:
That man the best years of whose life were given
To arid studies, whose impulsive youth,
Whose vigorous manhood, has restrained its soarings,
Compressed its energies, to gain one end,
Will loathly own that end not worth attaining,
Even to himself, — above all, when he sees
Less favored crowds with envying admiration
Revere his inappreciable merits.
Shall he whom all believe in doubt himself?

[*Stanley and Dr. Hermann continue to talk in dumb show.*

EMMA, *aside.*

How sky and trees and flowers looked kindly on me!
The winds, the birds, even the humming insects,
Had something for me loving in their tones.
I live in a changed world: the glow, the beauty,
The friendliness have passed away and left it
Drear and unfeeling. It is not in me,
This change; else why this thirst to love,
This craving for the ample interchange
Of gushing, warm, unforced, unbound affection?

STANLEY, *to Hermann.*

'T is safe for you to scoff at scholarship.
A less learned man could not presume to do it.

HERMANN.

Men covet what they cannot estimate.
The unknown good, the unconceived, has charms

Beyond the tried. The untaught look on learning
As a philosopher's-stone, a talisman,
That gives the wearer power and consequence,
Invests him with mysterious distinction,
With attributes whose realness can be scanned
But by his peers. Howe'er among themselves
These may divide and wrangle, they uphold
The common cause against outside assailants, —
Let no profane hand touch their ark. Believe me,
'T is not so much the intrinsic worth of learning,
As its contingencies, inspires the crowd
Of votaries real or seeming. Fashion some,
Others ambition leads, or vanity.
The patient seekers after truth are few;
Rare the enthusiasts for ancient lore.
These seldom men, when found, deserve respect
Proportioned to their genius or their merit.
Think not that I would undervalue learning,
Real learning; 't is the spurious I question.
To read the history of the human mind,
Writ as we find it in the master works
The long departed ages have bequeathed us,
This is no futile labor. To unfetter
The lore else sealed up in a silent language,
And give it forth living once more and fruitful,
This is no arid, no unthankful task. —
What in the hands of genius is arid? —
But this asks something more than scholarship.
A poet only can revive a poet;
A sage must reproduce the sage's work.

We are not poets all, alas! nor sages.
It is not given to all of us to wield
The wizard wand of re-creative power.
[*Smiling.*
I almost think it was not given to me.

STANLEY.

You rate yourself lower than others do.

HERMANN.

No, no! I know my powers. They did not lead
In that direction. On some other path
I might have come to good. I've toiled and moiled,
Year after year, on learned commentaries, —
First those of others, then upon my own.
No classic work but I have analyzed,
Have scanned as with a microscope. I spent
My strength on doubtful passages, proposing
Here a new reading, there suggesting changes
In the till then accepted punctuation.
I changed the initial letters of two words
In the Æneid, — and with great advantage;
'T is true indeed; two passages made clear
Which had before greatly perplexed the critics.
When I showed Helen how it was before,
And how with my new reading, she perceived
The importance, instantly, of my correction.

STANLEY, *politely.*

Your labors were not, then, without result?

HERMANN, *laughing.*

You see the pedant is not dead in me! —

[*Seriously.*

Not quite without result. No, I may say it:
I had successes better worth than these
You have just heard me boast. I 've had my share
Of fame in the learned world, and I enjoyed it, —
Yes, I enjoyed it in a certain measure.
But when that moment of awakening came!
When the electric spark that coursed the earth
Reached me in my calm study, when the world,
The actual living world revealed itself,
When first I waked to feeling for my kind,
When human hopes and human interests
Made claim on me, with what another beat
Moved my strong pulse! Yes, for one month I lived!
I am a broken and disheartened man,
My dreams are faded, my hopes laid in dust;
But still I deem those fleet illusions worth
More than realities; even now I hold
My disappointments dearer than my triumphs. —

[*Checking himself.*

Whither have I been led? What matters now
My pedant life, or my political?
The one has been as fruitful as the other.

EMMA, *aside, extending her hand to the flowers upon the table. The others continue to converse.*

Only the flowers have kept their faith with me.
They still are kind. But they are touched with sadness.

They speak of soothing now, — no more of joy.
If it be true, as I have heard it said,
That spirits gone from here have leave to work
Upon the earth they 've left, — the good and lovely
Busied with objects beautiful and useful,
The wicked with the hurtful and unsightly, —
If this be true, perhaps 't is Agatha's
To paint the chalice of the opening flowers;
Her angel hand, perhaps, prepared the tints
Of these soft field-flowers or of those pure roses:
She knew them destined to her pining sister.
Surely, she would not live in glory there,
And see me in my tedious earthly home,
Nor strive to send me solace.

HERMANN, *to Stanley.*

Ah, your daughter!
Her scholarship is of another sort, —
If truly we may call that scholarship
Which is yet more of nature than of toil.
Not by slow work, not by a mole-like digging,
Does she unearth the treasures of the past;
With an enchanter's wand she summons them,
And they disclose themselves.

STANLEY.

Precisely so.

HERMANN.

Often a passage held as difficult
She has at once, without a word of comment

From me, expounded like the ablest scholar,
Hitting the meaning with unerring instinct.

STANLEY.

Ah, yes!

HERMANN.

Her fine, idealizing sense
Enables her to recompose the scene
The poet pictured, — to reclothe his heroes
With their own form, reanimate their voice :
For her they live and feel and act again ;
For her once more put on their grace and freshness
The fairy tales that charmed the youthful world.
I, who in early youth was set to drudge
Over these works, construing word by word,
Till they had lost life and significance, —
Who in my manhood merely looked on them
As offering themes for learned commentation,
On which to found my fame, had not conceived
A mind so free that it could simply take
These works as other works, as other novels, —
Delighted, pained, admiring, or condemning,
As it found cause, without pedantic carping
Or superstitious reverence, — reading them
In the same spirit they were written in,
Or that in which they first were listened to.
'T was in your Helen I first found this marvel.
Themes in scholastic hands grown dry and sterile
Took a new bloom for her ; her genial nature
Infused them with its life.

STANLEY.

Her father feels
Your praise not more than just. Her intellect
Is truly of a most uncommon order:
The powers of acquisition and of judgment
Are found in happy equipoise.

HERMANN.

Your pardon!
These gifts are not the intellect's alone.
What we, for want of better name, call heart
Has a large share in genius, — in hers.
Her soul perceives the latent harmonies
That ruder senses miss. She feels the accord
Between the genius of a race, its language,
Its history: thus each reveals the other.
Through some mysterious power of sympathy,
The acts, the thoughts of distant times and lands,
To her are as the present and the near.
All that is human is akin to her.

STANLEY.

Doctor, how well you understand my daughter!
I 've seen all this, but could not have expressed it.
Thank you for helping me. — I have some fears
That marriage with its cares and occupations
May be to her, at least in some degree,
What 't is to women commonly, the grave
Of talents and accomplishments.

HERMANN.

This fear
Was the sole drawback to the satisfaction
I found in teaching her. Could I have had
A youth as pupil with such gifts as hers,
What joy, what pride for me! As 't was, I felt
That these fair blossoms might all drop untimely
And never come to fruit. Yet possibly,
In a young man's case, hindrances yet graver
Had intervened to rob me of my harvest.
The charms of the world, its snares, its mean ambitions,
Prepare for men sometimes a heavier downfall
Than women find in that still gulf of marriage.
And truth to say, this singleness of heart,
This love of beauty for pure beauty's sake,
This sense of absolute truth, of absolute duty,
When found in men, is chiefly found in those
Whose course is early closed. I might have stood,
A useless, lone old man, beside the grave
Where my last cares and hopes lay mouldering.
'T is better as it is; and who shall say,
Although no present and apparent fruit
Come of my work, that it has all been lost?
Helen may pass through life obscure and silent;
But, in her tranquil course, she may have poured
Into new souls her genius, her wisdom,
And they may give forth, widely fertilizing,
The treasures drawn from these invisible springs.

STANLEY.

She wrote me she should teach her boy herself.

HERMANN.

Yes, there it is! A mother will not let
Her child be ignorant of what she knows,
If she can help it; and so true is this,
The Icelanders, a wise and primitive people,
Ordain by law women may not be married
Till they know how to read; secure of this:
That what the mother knows the child will know.
Thus they provide for popular instruction.
Ah, what you tell me gives me pleasure. Yet
The best intents are thwarted. I know not
Whether her husband shares ——

STANLEY.

My son-in-law
Is a good fellow, — a good fellow, Doctor!
No better heart. I 'm sure you think so, too.
Somewhat exacting. But we all are so,
When we love truly. And he worships Helen.
You know he loved her from her infancy.
It was all settled between him and me —
Rather, his father settled it with me —
Before she dreamed of marriage. And in truth,
Fancy's vagaries were forestalled by me.
I taught her to regard her fate as fixed.
Thus I preserved her from the wretched error
Women of genius and heart are prone to:
The dressing up some hollow effigy
With gifts and graces not its own; the making
For this poor puppet fatal sacrifices,
Deplored too late when time has dissipated

Forever the illusion. I at least
Secured my daughter wealth, position, leisure:
Three real goods, which, if the unsubstantial
Are added, only will enhance their value;
And if these fail, will help to compensate
Their loss.

HERMANN.

I trust these will not fail; for man
Lives not by bread alone, and still less woman.

STANLEY.

Helen is happy, if a woman can be.
Her husband, handsome, rich, and well brought up,
Has elegant tastes, unusual cultivation.
He has seen Europe. Very few young men
Have his advantages. Yes, she is happy.
Besides, she loves him, — I am sure of it, —
And better since her marriage than before.

HERMANN.

Before, I own it, I had some misgivings.
That constant putting off ——

STANLEY.

Oh, girlishness!
And then 't was natural she should make no haste
To quit a home of which she was the centre,
The light, the life. She could not find herself
Of more importance or more independent
In her own house. But, since she must be married,

I thought myself most fortunate to find
A match so safe, — in most respects, so equal.
If I have sometimes said within myself,
"*He does n't deserve her*," 't is that no man could,
And that I ask a happiness for her
Of which I think no other woman worthy.
But, if you thought she was not fond of him,
You were deceived. She did not show it boldly:
You 'd not expect that of her: and, indeed,
Her love was not that trivial, flighty sort,
Made up of tears and smiles and fond caprices,
But a kind sister's tenderness, — the best
Foundation for a happy married life.

HERMANN.

Perhaps so, — yes, — no doubt. But yet sometimes
It seemed to me — you 'll think I am conceited —
She liked my company as well as his.
She often seemed more bright and gay with me
Than with her lover.

STANLEY.

She was more at ease,
It may have been; and then perhaps she wished
To make the most of those last days with you.
I saw with pleasure, that, instead of idling,
As most girls do, the time of her engagement,
She was collected and industrious,
Then as before, — perhaps a shade more quiet,
As well became a woman entering on

A change so grave. If I had ever doubted
She loved him as a wife should love her husband,
These doubts were all removed on the last visit
I made to them. I thought I knew my daughter, —
Knew all her loveliness, her grace, her beauty;
But, until I had seen her in her home,
I only knew her half. I can't describe it,
This change, — it was so slight, yet so essential.
When you have seen her, you will understand.
Such perfect patience! such sweet deference! —
You know the best of men are sometimes captious. —
Yes, truly, love works miracles with women!

[*Smiling.*

It almost moves my jealousy to see
Myself supplanted thus.

EMMA, *starting up.*

Ah, that was lightning!

STANLEY.

But very distant.

EMMA.

It will soon come nearer.

STANLEY.

Not very soon. We shall have some time yet.
We shall see Helen safe at home before
The storm comes on us. Do not be afraid.

[*Going near her.*

Do calm yourself. You have seen storms before.

EMMA.

Only too many! Oh, that night! that night!

STANLEY.

'T is your imagination lends them terrors.

EMMA.

Imagination? Yes, and memory!

STANLEY, *kindly.*

You have, indeed, most sad associations
With thunder-storms; but recollect, my Emma,
You have no loved ones now upon the sea;
And if you had, this storm which moves towards us
Would not endanger them. In general,
These tempests move but in a narrow circuit.
[*Soothingly.*
And then this storm will not be violent,
Like that you 're thinking of.

EMMA.

Do you believe not?
Perhaps it will not. But it seems so like it!

STANLEY.

You think the same of every storm that rises.

EMMA.

That storm was hours and hours in coming on.
Oh, how distinctly I remember it!

I sat and watched the long, pale, silent flashes,
Held to my place by a mysterious dread.
At last my strained ear caught a distant roll,
And then a fuller peal. In funeral train
The clouds moved forward, heavy, black, and slow.
And yet the sky above me was serene;
The air was still. But, as I marked this stillness,
Sudden a frightened fluttering of the leaves!
Then, all at once, a tumult overhead!
The massy cloud-rocks crashing on each other!
The mad winds clutching at the struggling tree-tops!
I knew not then above what trembling victims
Those clouds had frowned before they burst on us.
I knew not then what sails those winds had rent
Before they spent their fury on our pines.
And yet, perhaps, that thrill of nameless dread,
Unknown to me, a daughter of the tropics,
Up to that hour, even in the wildest storm,
Was my heart's answer to a dying groan,
Borne to me on the swift, unpitying blast!

STANLEY, *aside.*

The only subject that can rouse emotion
In Emma is the shipwreck of her sister
And little cousin.

HERMANN, *aside.*

What tenacity
The affections have sometimes in feeble natures!

STANLEY.

Calm yourself. This excitement will exhaust you.
Already you are flushed and feverish.

[*Going close to her and speaking low.*

'T is natural you should recollect with kindness
The sister who was as a mother to you,
And the young playmate of your early childhood,
Held rather as a sister than a cousin.
I do not blame the strength of your attachments:
But recollect how many years have passed;
Remember all you have to make you happy.
Cannot the husband, then, replace the friend?
The little girl whose early death you mourn,
Is she not more than given back in Helen?

EMMA, *aside*.

She is not given back, my little sister! —

[*Aloud.*

Yes, I am calm. I did not mean to vex you.

STANLEY.

It is not often that you vex me, Emma, —

[*Aside.*

Or, for that matter, move me any way. —

[*To Emma.*

You are tranquillity itself, in general.
Come, cheer up! These sad looks would grieve our child. —

[*Aside.*

I must have patience with her feebleness;
For is she not the mother of my Helen? —

[*Aloud, looking at the flowers in the vase.*

What pretty flowers! how tastefully arranged!
You always have a fairy world about you!

EMMA, *smiling.*

Yes, they are beautiful! Who gathered them?
I found them here when I came down this morning.
I thought at first that Helen had arrived,
And had prepared me this surprise. I looked
To see her come out from behind the curtain,
As formerly. —

[*Aside.*

She is a dear, good child!

STANLEY.

What! all these flowers you found here?

EMMA.

No, — this vase full.
The others Bella brought. I always send her
Out every morning to bring in the flowers,
And then I see them all arranged myself.

STANLEY.

The Doctor smiles.

[*To the Doctor.*

Is this your mystery?

HERMANN.

No, no, — not mine! But I perhaps can solve it.

As I came over early in the morning,
Not to be wanting at the first reception,
I saw that wan-faced, silent girl, Theresa,
Stealing along the garden-walk before me,
Her apron filled with flowers. As her whole air
Betokened secrecy, I stopped discreetly,
Studying the plants that grew beside the walk,
And then went sauntering on the longest way
Towards the house. As I approached the window —
This one — and stooped to raise the sash and enter,
I heard the sliding of another sash
In the same room, and, turning, saw Theresa
In the act of issuing forth. She did not greet me,
But glided off in silence.

EMMA.

That Theresa!
Why does the strange thing, by her wayward silence,
Take from me the enjoyment of my life?
I never had a girl I cared so much for,
Nor one that seemed to be so faithful to me.
I really thought it was a true attachment. —
[*Aside.*
But for me disappointment everywhere!

STANLEY.

You 're not distressing yourself now for that?

EMMA.

No, no, — I don't distress myself.

STANLEY.

I hope not. —
Doctor, what say you? See, the sky looks clear.
It will not rain yet. Shall we take a stroll
Along the avenue to meet the carriage?
The people have been drawn up there an hour
Or more, to greet their mistress when she enters.
'T will be a pretty scene, and we shall have
A smile from Helen's eyes some half-hour sooner.

HERMANN.

Thanks, many thanks! That hope were bribe enough
For a less pleasant walk; but this needs none.

STANLEY.

Emma, in passing, I send Bella to you;
When we return, we bring you something precious.

[*Stanley and Hermann go out.*

EMMA.

They leave me here to meet the storm alone!
What 's Bella? What can she do for me? Oh,
I shall die here of fear and loneliness! —

[*She goes to the window, looks out, returns calmer, and seats herself on the sofa.*

My Helen comes! My lovely, graceful Helen!
And with her — Hecate comes! Ah, there it is!
Hecate comes back to freeze, to petrify me!
And everybody thinks she 's so devoted!
They wonder I could give her up to Helen. —

How I remember when she first came near me!
I felt her fix her basilisk eyes on me,
And a cold shiver ran through all my veins.
Was it a warning sent to me, perhaps? —
Every one envied me my handsome slave.
I had not enough courage to refuse her.
Why did I not? O Hecate! my life's vampire! —
Yet I have nothing to reproach her with, —
Or only with too constant a devotion. —
How high she held herself, the silent creature!
Dumb out of pride, — not out of ignorance,
As we supposed at first. — When first I heard
The accents of her voice, how strange a thrill
Shot through my heart! It was again a warning. —
It was for Helen that she broke her silence.
Yes, yes, she came between me and my child!
And this is why I cannot love my daughter
As other mothers do. O Helen, Helen,
Could my heart once gush out for you in fondness!

[*Clasping her hands passionately, and rising.*

Could I but once enjoy a mother's rapture,
In full, full, overflowing, deluging measure,
And yield my soul in that o'erwhelming bliss!
That moment, that death moment, should repay me
My torpid life! —

[*Sinking down again.*

No, it is not for me! —

[*After a pause, tenderly.*

How did I long for you, my pretty darling,
Before you came! how did I press my lips

On that dreamed cheek! how did I twine my fingers
In airy ringlets of imagined gold!
O precious one! O little unseen daughter!
Dearer even now than is my living child!
Yes, when you came, you should restore me all:
My Agatha should live again in you;
The love my parent-sister poured on me
I should return to you in seven-fold measure,
And that which my fond heart had felt for her
Should throb for me in my sweet daughter's bosom!
Oh, all those tedious years of lonely life
Passed with that hard, dry, selfish hypocrite,
That governess of mine, and my stern father,
How did they disappear and melt in nothing!
My coming life appeared to link itself
To the far past: these made my whole existence.
I almost thought I always had been happy.
And when the time came that I was to press you
Real and substantial in these waiting arms,
Oh, it was Hecate held you up to me!
Oh, it was Hecate laid you on my bosom! —
How came she there? I did not send for her, —
I did not want her. — When I felt the touch
Of my own child, it was not what I looked for.
My heart stood still, instead of bounding up.
Something came in between my babe and me.
It was her love. That creature dared to love it!
She dared to vie in tenderness with me
For my own infant! —

I am very weak!

I know I 'm weak. I 'm sure that Stanley thinks so.
'T is so, or I had never let her nurse it.
Yes, I am weak, — or only strong to suffer! —
What was she to my child, that she should love it?
My happiness was poisoned at its source.
In vain my baby bloomed in health and beauty;
I could not love with fulness of enjoyment.
I saw her little arms thrown fondly round
That neck, her head reposing on that bosom!
Yet could I sooner have forgiven the love
The unreasoning child bestowed upon its nurse
Than that strange chill that sat on my own heart.
Did I not love her? Did I not admire her?
Had I not pride in her? Yes, all of this!
Yet, even as she sat upon my lap,
And I was fondling her with every mark
Of fullest, deepest love, when I looked round
And saw that stranger woman standing near,
Ready to take my not unwilling darling,
I felt the impotence of my dull heart.
Her silent look said more than my caressings.
I sank back baffled, weary, inly owning
The nurse's tenderness was more than mine.
It was a spell that woman cast on me.
These Africans are skilled in dreadful arts,
Which they transmit, the mothers to their daughters,
And they to theirs. Hecate might well be one
To share this fearful legacy. Her look —
And, above all, when it is fixed on me —
Has something in it of undying pain,

Mixed with exulting triumph, that might suit
A priestess of those temples that they tell of
Where men pay worship to the fallen spirit.
It holds me still, this chilling, cramping spell!
I wait my child, not as the mother waits
Whose fond protecting love requires an object
To foster and support. — I foster Helen!
I guide and counsel, I admonish her,
As mothers do! Poor, little, feeble woman,
I, guardian of that vigorous, noble creature!
She is less mine than ever! For my infant
I could in part fulfil the mother's office,
Could minister at times to little wants,
Could aid to conquer petty obstacles,
Could soothe in childish troubles, fancied dangers, —
Could at least feel myself the wiser, stronger.
But, ah, how soon she passed beyond my reach!
I am the earthbound bird that sees the swanlet
Its wings have brooded soaring high in space. —

It is my birthday! No one thinks of it,
Except that poor half-crazy girl, Theresa!
These were her gift, these flowers I thought so kind.
Why did she bring them? Not to do me pleasure. —
They are all white, as for a bride — or corpse.
In her mind had they some significance? —
Perhaps they are a sign of penitence.
Her heart may have been touched by Helen's coming. —
Perhaps she thought of Helen's little boy.
Yes, white means innocence. — Perhaps she meant

A type of the pure joy of this reunion.
I 'll take it so.

[*She goes to the table, leans over the vase, and touches the flowers.*

And yet I do not feel it.
Since I have known these flowers were brought by her,
It seems to me their leaves are touched with blight.
They look at me as in reproach or warning.
What would they say to me? What pain awaits me? —
No, nothing new! The present is sufficient!
These pallid flowers, plucked by unloving hands,
Alone remind of my neglected birthday. —

And yet perhaps Helen did not forget it. —

[*With joy.*

She thought of me, when she arranged this journey!
My Helen thought of me! I hear her say, —
"That day shall give my mother back her daughter."
And shall I be the last to welcome her?
Why do I stay? The clouds are passing off.
The storm but threatened. Some few drops of rain,
And it is over. All my idle fears
Pass off as easily! My heart feels light,
As suits the day that gives me back my child.
My child! Sweet words! And this day brings her back!

[*She goes to the window.*

The flowers repeat it, the birds warble it!
All Nature seems to sing in happy chorus:
"This day shall give the mother back her child!"

[*She goes out.*

MORNING.

SCENE III.

STANLEY *and* HERMANN *are walking together in a wide avenue. On one side are trees; on the other an open lawn. They stop at a spot where a large tree has been left standing in the middle of the avenue, which widens out on either side of it. The slaves in holiday attire are ranged along the avenue, or form groups on the lawn, or are looking out from behind the trees.*

HERMANN.

A cheerful scene, and full of poetry,
To me, a European! These dark faces,
These vivid hues, this profuse gesture, — all
That speaks the sun-born and the youthful race
Has a keen charm in it to one like me,
Who live in thought, in whom emotion, impulse,
So long held down, almost forget their rights.
When first I landed on your shores, I found
Not what I had imagined. Everywhere
I saw another Europe: busier,
More energetic, and more self-reliant,
But the same world, engrossed by the same cares,
Pursuing the same ends, with more success,
Because with greater freedom, and, alas
That I must say, devotion more exclusive.
The freshness, the exuberance, the slighting
Of the cold actual for the warm ideal,
All those rash virtues, those endearing faults,

That I had thought must mark the youthful race,
Existed only in my foolish hope.
It seemed this people had been born mature:
I found an age of reason permanent.

STANLEY.

And you object to this?

HERMANN.

Oh, I approve it!
That is to say, one half of me approves it:
The other found it rather same, perhaps,
And sad. — The very child encountered me
With such a thoughtful, penetrative glance,
I felt myself the boy, and him the world-wise.
Youth I found not. Hardly I caught its trace
Upon the hollow cheek of a gaunt stripling,
Or in the patient eyes of some poor woman:
Its mirth, its lightness, its enthusiasms
Held down and choked, the forms it should have graced
Bearing the impress only of its struggles.

STANLEY.

You saw the North.

HERMANN.

I saw at first the North.
But even here I found again my Europe.

STANLEY.

Yes, there you found its factories, its workshops;
And here you meet its culture, its refinements.

HERMANN, *aside.*

I will not flatter him, and must not wound.
What shall I say?

STANLEY.

It 's very praiseworthy,
Hard-handed labor, — most respectable.
The sturdy farmer, the expert mechanic
Are valuable members of the state.
The country that has all its boast in these
Has strength, has solid wealth. But the refinements,
The true delights of life, the higher tastes,
Find their development but where two races
Inhabit the same soil: one being destined
To furnish the material wants of life,
And one to cultivate the finer graces.

HERMANN.

One made for work, the other for enjoyment.

STANLEY.

If you prefer. I only state a fact:
I do not justify its being one.
But toil and taste, producing and consuming,
Are not in this world cast in one man's lot.
Coarse food contents the clown whose labor yields
The spicy fruits, fine grains, and delicate wines
That court the Sybarite's exacting palate.
The artisan scarce values his own work:
He paints, he carves but for another's eyes;
And he that weaves seldom knows how to wear.

No, — these two separate classes need each other.
The lower from the surplus of the higher
Draws its subsistence ; while those finer wants
Which it knows not, but which to the superior
Are real needs, its labor satisfies :
Happy when, as in Europe once, as here,
Fixed barriers divide the working classes
From those whose office is to think and rule.
That restless striving, that uneasy envy,
Which, at the North, and in those states called free
Of the Old World, disturb the poor man's peace,
Are here unknown : his birth has fixed his station.
The high, the low, take from the hand of Fate,
Unquestioning, their lot. And no injustice.
To those the manual toil, — to these the mental.
To us belong the joys of aspiration ;
To them the calmer pleasures of contentment.

HERMANN, *aside.*

I had been prompt once to take up the gauntlet.
But now, — no, no, let the world wag ; I 'm old.

STANLEY.

And so you found us all too European :
There too much industry, here too much ease ?

HERMANN.

Why, something so.

STANLEY, *complacently.*

You are not so far wrong.

In the North you find your thrifty middle classes ;
We represent your aristocracy.

HERMANN, *with sudden energy.*

Ah, if you knew the noble race as I do,
You would less willingly find this resemblance!
I 've seen them near : I know their vain ambitions,
Their empty cares, false pride, and splendid meanness :
Spending a fortune on a feast, and bating
In the same day the wage of some poor mother!

STANLEY, *with a little hauteur.*

'T is natural that you should hold your views,
And I my own. We see from different stand-points.

HERMANN, *not perceiving Stanley's pique.*

'T is somewhat strange here in America
Our old noblesse possesses the prestige
That has died out in Europe. You imagine
That nobleness goes with nobility.
We know, we others. But this Scotch Magician,
This Great Unknown, as people like to call him,
Is the chief source of your illusions. He
Has given to rank, which man's caprice created,
That homage we should only pay to those
Whom the Eternal hand has signed for honor.

STANLEY.

The stamp of chivalry, of high-souled courage,
Of loyalty, of generous self-devotion,
Are not these marks divine ?

HERMANN.

And these you lend
To the noblesse of Europe! Mere illusion!
They won their place by brutal violence;
Have kept it by tenacious selfishness.
Look from the bosom of old Father Rhine!
Behold on every cliff the robber's nest,
Whence in old time their vulture eyes peered down
To mark where, borne on his benevolent tide,
The laden bark advanced, their destined prey!
Look round in Switzerland, in Italy!
See, on the heights, their crumbling fastnesses,
Joy of the dilettante traveller,
Traditional object of the peasant's hate!
Here were the cradles of our old noblesse.
Rapine and murder watched its infancy;
Its riper years more organized wrong protected.
And now, in its decrepitude, you see it
Grasping with trembling hand its worn insignia,
Alternating a doting insolence
With palsied fear, as its security
Is shaken or flattered by the year's event.
I 've heard Americans regretting blandly
Their land had none of these romantic ruins
That crown our heights and overlook our rivers.
"Our Hudson were as lovely as your Rhine,"
I 've heard them say, "had we but your old castles."

STANLEY.

'T is true, though. I have thought the same, myself.

HERMANN.

Ah, if your land consents to envy Europe,
Let it be rather for the wealth of art
Laid up for it by humble, patient hands;
Or be it for the victories won in science
By silent toil of calm, secluded men:
Not for these monuments of crime and vengeance.
Happy the land whose sons have piled no stones
But those laid up by bloodless hands; whose fabrics
Dread no attacks but those of time! Grudge not
The older world the mournful poetry
That wreathes itself about those blackening ruins!

STANLEY.

You find, then, something in our land to praise?

HERMANN.

Much, much to praise, and a few things to love, —
Even in the bustling, striving North; and here
My heart and fancy can both find their food. —

[*Interrupting himself, as he sees a gratified expression steal over Stanley's face.*

I do not speak now of your social circles;
Choice as they are, they offer nothing new:
They, like the rest, are a transplanted Europe.
Nor was I even thinking of our Helen:
She is herself; no land lays claim to her;
That is apart; there is my life of lives.
But for my idle studies, for refreshing
Of my warped, dried-up faculties, I stroll

Before the cabins of this primitive people,
Or sit me down amid a scene like this.

STANLEY.

Among the blacks? They are sometimes amusing:
They have quick senses, and some native fun.

HERMANN.

But you yourself, though born and bred among them,
Have scarcely known so much of them as I.
You cannot view them in the light that I do.
You see them worse or better than they are.
Their wits are sharpened by desire to please,
Or blunted by the dread of blame. They wait
Upon your look. They smile or draw long faces,
Whine dolefully or speak in chirping tones,
To keep in tune with your imagined humor.
But me, the dreaming, silent foreigner,
They mind me not more than the waving branches,
Or innocent winds, that bear away their words,
But not report them. Thus their cares, their joys,
Their loves and hates express themselves before me
In their own natural language: word, look, gesture,
Unstudied, unrestrained. Stretched on the turf,
Or propped against some pine-tree trunk, I bathe
My world-worn soul in this fresh gushing Nature,
As in the fabled youth-restoring spring.

STANLEY, *smiling.*

What a true German! Doctor, give me leave
To smile a little at your poet ardor.

HERMANN, *laughing cordially.*

Free leave! free leave! I knew you could not see
What I can see. For you it is not there.
But never mind. Let me enjoy my feast,
And you your laugh. You have a brilliant world
To lead your life in: wealth, power, influence.
I only have my studies and my dreams.

STANLEY.

Under which head are classed your present ——

HERMANN.

Ravings?

Under both heads, perhaps. Man is my study, —
This poor maligned and deified human nature,
Its lights and shades, its strengths and weaknesses.
But, as I am a simple amateur,
And my researches have no aim of profit,
Whether for me or for the world, I hardly
May call my studies more than reveries.
But be that as it will, I can pursue them
With interest untired among a people
Still in the golden age of faith and fancy,
Not risen up to that of doubt and reason.
Then it is touching to my heart, the fate
Of this poor orphaned race, whose opening youth
Is trained by no too tender stepdame. Yet
To Cinderella in her dismal corner
Came fairy gifts; and to this abject people
Flow from the world of fancy infinite comforts

That elder, happier races hardly know.
Not easy to repress the joy of youth
In races any more than single children. —
I will say something strange: In this New World,
What I have found of youth and poetry
I have found here.

STANLEY.

You have found poetry?

HERMANN.

Lived, looked. Nor only lived and looked, but sung:
All except written. Not a circumstance
Checkers their life or yours but has its minstrels.
Each joy, each sorrow passes into song
That mates itself with a congenial music, —
Now deeply mournful, now so wildly glad,
As if the pining spirit, cramped and baffled
Within its crouching frame, had found an outlet
And soared to sudden freedom.
On your shelves
I see the Scottish minstrelsy, I see
Servian anthology, Icelandic ballads;
In fine, you have a choice herbarium
Of the wild-flowers of other lands, and leave
Those that spring up about your feet to wither,
Unculled, uncared for: yet they might, perhaps,
Take place beside their sisters. I once heard
A slow lament, sung by a gray old man
Whose little granddaughter was sold away,
That seemed to me for melody and pathos

To have few rivals in the primitive verse
Of infant peoples. 'T was not on your place;
'T was on your neighbor's there.

STANLEY.

Ah, yes, — I know.
Shabby of him. I don't approve his course.
If his affairs compelled him to adopt it,
'T would be another thing; but he is rich.
Only some grave offence, or their own choice —
Through some caprice, or marriage off the place,
Or so — can make me send my people off.

HERMANN.

I know it. They have not that cause of grief
To exalt their souls to poetry. But sorrow
Has many inlets to the human soul;
And the slave's life, be lenient as you will,
Is liable to some vicissitudes.

STANLEY.

Less, though, than that of others. — Did you hear, —
Speaking of music, — did you ever hear
The girl Theresa, when she sang her best?

HERMANN.

When I came here she was already silent.

STANLEY.

The fault of that ungrateful dog, her son. —

You find them poets, then? I 've sometimes heard
Their songs from far, but did not catch the words.
The airs I have found pleasing. Yes, for music
Some of them have a real gift, I grant you.

HERMANN.

I marvel no appreciative hand
Has yet caught up these wandering melodies.
The time will come when these neglected strains
Will charm in hall and drawing-room. You smile.
Who knows? What if the earliest contribution
Truly original, that this New World
Makes to the gentler arts, should be the product
Of this poor foundling?
I have sometimes thought
This unformed race, scarce issued from its childhood,
Has been brought hither from its ardent birthplace
That its warm blood may give a fuller pulse
To veins grown too sedate by time and wisdom;
As over Europe's passionate, fervid South
Was once sent down the cool Transalpine flood.

STANLEY.

That thought could come but from a European,
But from a German.

HERMANN.

Yes, we Germans have
Few prejudices on the score of race.
We live beneighbored by not kindred peoples.

Some of them hate us. But we hate them not;
Content to absorb them, — having for allies
Time and our own superiority.
You Anglo-Saxons hold your sacred blood
Too precious to be mixed with other streams.
You frown upon the Celt, your cousin-german;
Frenchmen, Italians, not their Roman lineage
Makes them your equals; and the lofty Spaniard
Encounters pride more steadfast than his own;
Your brother German finds a mild disfavor.
As for the humbler and more distant branches
Of the human family, you hardly deign
To count them kindred. That it could bring profit
To your high race to blend its stream with theirs,
What blasphemy!

STANLEY.

But little less, indeed!
Your satire is not quite without foundation,
Perhaps, in what concerns the higher races,
Who stand with us on the same grade of culture;
But as regards a union with the lower, —
Or, if you like it better, undeveloped, —
We cannot guard the purity of blood
Too carefully.

HERMANN.

Yet scorn them not too far:
Their turn may come, perhaps. Remember, men
Do not take seed of a perfected fruit,
When they would raise new sorts, but rather choose

Some ruder kind, half-way to excellence.
And thus it is with races: a fresh people
Must in its nature have rough elements,
That, when toned down by social contact, trained
By formal culture, it may still be racy,
Not weakened into mediocrity.
The world is for the young. — Your nation's youth
Is, after all, a pseudo youth. Behold,
It is a scion from an ancient tree,
Not a new seedling! Whether is it destined,
As I have heard old farmers say of grafts,
To pine and dwindle with the parent tree,
Bearing distempered fruit on failing limbs,
While yet its separate life is new? This question
Time only can decide.

STANLEY.

I am not sanguine.
But, if we fail, I find the cause of failure
Not in the race, but in the institutions
That offer no restraint to innovation.
A government that follows the direction
In which the passions of the mob impel it,
What pledge for permanence? what pledge for safety?

HERMANN.

You will not fail! I did but theorize, —
An idle pastime. No, you will not fail.
I find my hope there whence you draw your fears.
With freedom, Nature finds her own defence

Against the causes of decline. In vain
Will prejudice propose its poor specifics.
The sturdy health that is the gift of freedom
Discards all nostrums. Not by stern exclusion,
But generous welcome, will your favored nation
Guard its preëminence. Your friendly shores,
Offering a second home to those whose boldness
Has earned proscription, or whose enterprise
Desires a wider field, prepares the advent
Of a new race upon the human scene:
Not new in name, but young in hope and vigor.
That energetic land from which you draw
Your love of sway and love of liberty
Thus kept its manhood green. Its tide of life,
Still freshened by infusion of new blood,
Rolled full and strong while lands whose narrow rule
Attracted no recruits declined and dwindled.
Yet there was but a type, a prophecy
Of what shall find fulfilment here, — the germ
Of the fair blossoms and the generous fruits
That here shall teem.
Your nation is not born.
The spirit is but shaping now the form
For a new incarnation. Lands and races
The most remote, the most estranged, contribute
The elements of this fresh life. Destruction
Will work for it, as will creative power;
Discord as harmony; regret and pain
Must have their part, as well as hope and joy.
But in the fitting time the God-informed

Will stand forth fair and strong, and take upon him
His office in the world.

[*The noise of carriage-wheels is heard, then ceases.*

STANLEY.

Hark! was not that ——
No ——

HERMANN.

Yes! The carriage stops. She is alighting.
She has divined that we await her here.
This was a favorite spot with her. This tree,
Sole lingerer of the primeval forest,
Had for her eyes the charm that desolate sternness
Has for the kind and happy. Here they are!

[HELEN *enters, followed by* HECATE, *who carries the child.*

STANLEY.

Helen!

HELEN, *springing forward to meet him.*

My father!

[*Helen embraces her father, then turns and gives her hand to Hermann.*

My best Doctor!

[EMMA *enters. Helen hastens to meet her, and embraces her warmly.*

EMMA, *returning Helen's embrace.*

Darling!

HERMANN, *aside.*

The same, — and yet her countenance is other.
She has passed through another phase, I see.

EMMA, *whispers.*

You love me, Helen?

HELEN.

Dearest mother!

EMMA.

Truly?

Darling! You really love her, then, your mother? —

[*Aside.*

She is not now so far from me as once.
Has she known sorrow, then? 'T is probable.

HELEN, *holding her mother's hand in both hers, and speaking low and tenderly.*

I did not love her half enough before.
I never knew how mothers loved their children,
Till I had one to love. You felt for me
All that I feel for him?

EMMA.

All? All, and more!
You have so many gifts, have so much knowledge!
I knew but how to love, to love my child!

HELEN.

Your children now. What happy days, my mother,
We will all have together! —

[*Looking round for her child.*

Where 's my darling?

FLORA, *coming forward.*

Hecate has carried him the shortest way
Towards the house.

EMMA, *aside.*

Hecate! She comes between me
And all I love. Even this happy moment
Her name embitters. —

[*To Helen.*

What! without your order?

HELEN.

She fears the sun for him. She might have waited
Till you had given him a first caress. —
But you have not to learn what Hecate is.
You know her waywardness and faithfulness, —
Both due, perhaps, to your indulgence.

EMMA.

Yes, —
My false indulgence. I am very weak.

HELEN, *caressingly.*

Not so! but kind, and win more love than fear.

EMMA.

She does not love me, Helen; do not think so.
I have a touchstone here by which I know it:
I should love anything that gave me love, —
So much I need it. Her I do not love,
And cannot. Out of spite to me, I know

She has withdrawn the child from my embrace.
She knew how full my heart must be, how eager,
And made herself a joy of thwarting me.

HELEN.

Let us suppose that she has hastened forward,
Not thinking you had strength to come so far,
To bring the darling to your arms the sooner.

EMMA, *smiling, but not satisfied.*

Oh, you were always ready with excuses
To shield your nurse.

HELEN, *smiling.*

And you to listen to them.

[EZEKIEL *enters: perceiving the group in the avenue, he turns aside, after fixing his eyes for an instant upon Helen, and is lost in the crowd on the lawn.* TURPIN *enters with him, and disappears with him.*

STANLEY.

Was that Ezekiel, whom they call the Preacher?

HERMANN.

The same.

STANLEY.

A sturdy fellow for a saint!

HELEN, *with interest.*

Was that Ezekiel?

STANLEY.

I don't like that man.
You 'd better not encourage him to come here.

HELEN.

What has he done?

STANLEY.

Oh, nothing that I know of;
His bearing does not please me.

HERMANN.

He is manly.

STANLEY.

A slave has no occasion.

HERMANN.

Yet a man
Works better than a tool without a soul.

STANLEY.

I demand very little of my people.
They are contented, and content their master.

HERMANN.

That is enough. The fellow who came after, —
He is not yours?

STANLEY.

He would not be mine long.

HERMANN.

I should not like to have that face about me.
If ever evil demon lived in man,
One looked out from those lurid eyes of his.

[DORCAS *enters, and endeavors to attract Helen's attention by curtsying repeatedly.*

HELEN.

Ah, it is Dorcas! —

[*To Dorcas.*

Where is Perdita?

DORCAS, *curtsying.*

She stayed at home a-nursing her sick child.

HELEN, *surprised.*

Her child?

DORCAS.

Why not? Fair as loblolly-bay flowers.
The mother 's not so bad; but he, a pearl!
A cunning little footboy for the mistress,
If he 'd grown up, or groom for master's brother.
Great honor for him, if he lived for it!

HELEN.

The child is sick?

DORCAS.

And likely to be sicker.
He 'll never come to stand behind your carriage
Or hand your plate. He 'll miss all that, the creature!

HELEN, *to Emma.*

Did you know this?

EMMA.

No, — no one told me of it.

HELEN.

She has no medicines, then?

DORCAS.

She does not need them.
Has she not me? Am I not worth ten doctors?
I know things no one in this country knows:
I have tried all. I would not have him die, —
Such luck as he was born to! Perdita,
The daughter of the mistress' favorite girl,
What might her son not get? But so it is:
Some die and leave their luck before they taste it,
[*Shaking her head mournfully.*
And some outlive it; and some live it out, —
[*Smiling and curtsying.*
As master will, and mistress.

HELEN, *to Emma.*

Shall we go
And see poor Perdita? She may need aid.

EMMA.

Send it by Dorcas.

DORCAS.

Send by me, Miss Helen!

EMMA.

Send it by Hecate, by the girl's own mother.

DORCAS.

Send it by me. I 'm more than an own mother.

EMMA.

Send what she wants. Give anything you like.
Only don't talk of her. Don't let me see her.
Her presence irritates me.

HELEN.

Dearest mother,
So kind to all, and only not to her!

EMMA.

Don't blame me, — don't reproach me, — don't you, Helen!
One thing I cannot bear, nor ever could:
To be found fault with. And by you! No, no!
I cannot tell you why I should dislike her.
'T is not on purpose. People have their natures.
There are to whom the strawberry is a poison;
The scent of roses makes some people sick;
With me, it is the sight of Perdita.
I 'm sure I 'm sorry that the child is ill,
And hope it may get well. Let Dorcas take her
All that she needs, whatever you can think of;
But I don't want to see her.

DORCAS, *aside.*

Not so strange

As you may think, young mistress, in your mother!
The pale thing has some human blood in her.
She has not wit enough to think it out,
But has a sense she has been wronged somehow.
I know it all. I, silly, poor old Dorcas,
Hold all these threads here in these trembling hands;
I pull them as I will, this way and that;
Know all their secrets; yes, know more of them
Than they themselves. O cunning brain of mine,
[*Tapping her forehead.*
What do you hold? Who looks at your brown case
And guesses what is locked there? I must dance!
I cannot hold my joy down!

STANLEY, *who has been talking apart with Hermann.*

I see well
I shall have none of Helen's time this morning.
The births, the deaths, the accidents, the weddings,
The various ailments, all must be reported,
Congratulated, counselled, or condoled on.
I 'll go my way until all this is settled.
The merry Alice, too, will soon be here;
And there will be a world of confidences:
'T is always so. Well, we shall meet at dinner.
To know you here must be enough till then.
The quiet evening will be all our own. —
Doctor, you have not seen my new improvements.
I 've urged them on, that they might be completed
For Helen's coming.
[*To Helen.*
You 'll be charmed with them.

This evening I shall take you to admire them.
By moonlight the effect is even better.

[*To Hermann.*

I 'll take a last look before Helen sees them,
To make sure all is right. Will you go, too?

[*Stanley and Hermann go out.*

DORCAS, *aside.*

But I don't want her coming to my cabin.
And Hecate, — above all, I don't want her.
What can they do there? I can dose the child:
I 'll do my all. What should I let it die for?
It 's no such boon to live. —

[*To Helen.*

Don't vex yourself
To come to her this morning. Mind the mistress.
I made the worst of it. You know we do.
In fact, it was n't so much the child that kept her.
She knows her face is not the welcomest,
And never comes into the mistress' way,
Unless she 's bidden. Take your ease this morning.
The child will do. He 's nothing else but cross.
He 'll soon come round.

WOMAN, *who had been pressing forward.*

Dorcas is in the right.
It is too soon to plague her with our matters.

VOICES.

Too soon! too soon! We 'll wait, — wait till to-morrow.

OTHER VOICES.

We 'll wait! we 'll wait!

OLD MAN, *to Helen.*

Make yourself comfortable,
And think of nothing at all. Our wants will keep.

HELEN.

Thank you, good friends! You shall not lose by waiting.

EMMA.

What do they say?

HELEN.

The child is not so ill
As I supposed at first.
[*Smiling.*
Old Dorcas says
She made the worst of it.

EMMA.

I knew she did.

HELEN.

I will not ask you to extend your walk.
To-morrow I will see poor Perdita.
[*To the people.*
Enjoy yourselves to-day. Go, have your feast.
Bella will bring you something more from me.
To-morrow those who have requests to make
May come to me.

MANY VOICES.

Thanks, mistress! Thanks, Miss Helen!

HELEN, *to Emma.*

We will walk slowly. Use my strength for yours.
How sweet it is to feel you lean on me!

EMMA, *aside.*

How could I ever think she did not love me,
And even doubt if I loved her? At last
I 'm happy! Oh, how happy could I be,
Did not the thought of that weird Hecate flit
Across me, as the shadowy, noiseless bat
In summer evenings through our darkening hall!

[*They disappear among the trees.*

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

NOON.

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

NOON.

SCENE. — *A large, low room in the upper story. Book-cases and other furniture of carved black wood.* HELEN *is seated near a table.* ALICE *enters, loaded with flowers, which she throws down on the table as she speaks.*

ALICE.

In your old haunt! I knew it! Here are flowers
To deck it with: not those bold garden-flowers
That stand to be admired, — but such sweet shy ones,
That I would not have forced them from their shade,
But for a bower secluded as their own.
They droop already. Ah, these savage flowers
Are not so patient as the tame! —

[*To* FLORA, *who enters.*

Some vases. —

[*Flora goes.*

Oh, I have walked so far!

HELEN.

But not alone?

ALICE.

No, not alone. But guess, though, who was with me.
You cannot guess!

HELEN.

Hecate?

ALICE.

No less a person.
I don't know how I came by such an honor.
She never used to think it worth her while
To give herself much trouble for my sake.
Perhaps with her clear sight she has read through me,
And knows how dearly I love you, my Helen!
Whatever loves you has a claim on her.
Did you observe how she caressed the spaniel
That yelped out such delight at seeing you?
But, whether for your merits or my own,
Hecate to-day was all devotion to me.
She knows the forest as I know my garden:
The very guardian fairy of the flowers
Finds not more surely their sweet hiding-places.
'T was a strange pleasure that I found in wandering
Through the dim paths with that mysterious creature.
Sometimes I really almost felt afraid,
As I walked on and heard her step behind:
I seemed to feel her gleaming gaze fixed on me.
But when I turned to look at her, her eyes
Rested on mine with such a gentle glance
I wondered at my fears; yet soon again
Would the same awe creep over me. I must

Still look and look, and still convince myself,
That, when I looked before, I saw aright.
I never knew her as she is to-day:
To-day I hardly wonder that you love her.
She has been always such a riddle to me,
Such an unreal, mysterious apparition,
That your confiding love for her appeared
Like those spell-bound affections that we read of.
I hardly even dared to ask about her,
Fearing to draw her anger on my head,
And feel the influence of some hurtful charm.
The awe I felt before her in my childhood
Has never quite worn off. Until to-day,
She 's been to me a half-unearthly creature:
But now I shall begin to think her human.
Is it the joy of the return has changed her?

HELEN.

That cannot be; for she has seemed less sad,
This year that she has been away with me,
Than I have ever known her. — My poor Hecate!
I have a heavy grief in store for her.

[FLORA *enters with vases, and places them on the table. At a sign from Alice, she goes. Alice arranges the flowers; from time to time leaving them, as she becomes interested in the conversation, and then returning to them again.*

ALICE.

A grief for Hecate, Helen?

HELEN.

She must leave me.
When we go home, she must remain behind.

ALICE.

How can you think of it? 'T will kill her!

HELEN.

Herbert ——

ALICE.

Oh, yes! I understand! He is not used
To such a queenly bearing in a slave.
Really, it is no wonder. 'T is like having
Zenobia in chains to wait on you.
Poor Hecate! 't is a grief for her, indeed!

HELEN.

I shall do all I can to lighten it.
To me this parting will be no slight pain.
Seeing her only as you see her, Alice,
You cannot know, — and Herbert does not know
What she has been and what she is to me.

ALICE.

Oh, yes! I see! Never was such devotion.

HELEN.

Nor is it only the unreasoning fondness
Nurses so often lavish on their darlings
That I have had from her; but more, much more.

Eccentric as she is, undisciplined
As seem her feelings, she can be to me,
When I have need of it, friend, counsellor,
The truest, wisest. In my infancy
My mother left me wholly in her charge:
Yet did she never try, by false indulgence,
To win my love; never used artifice;
Never taught me to use it; but maintained
Firmness and truth: hard virtues for a slave!

ALICE.

Truth a hard virtue for a slave? Say, rather,
Impossible. I have seen every virtue
In servants but that one.

HELEN.

This power to speak
The truth and act the truth confirms her story
That she was born in freedom. The first years
Govern the after-life.

ALICE.

How came she here?

HELEN.

No one knows what she is, nor whence she came.
My father bought her at a public sale,
Shortly before his marriage, and presented
Her to my mother as a bridal gift.

ALICE.

How did she come by this strange name of Hecate?

HELEN.

She answered loathly to the name they gave her:
She had another of her own. I once,
Trying to call her as she called herself,
In my imperfect speech, found this by chance,
And ever since she has been known by it:
For this strange name, so innocently given,
Fits her wild, brilliant, almost fearful beauty.

ALICE.

You well may call it fearful! Till to-day
I always shunned her. When she has proposed
To do me any service, I refused it.
It seemed she offered it in mockery,
And knew I should not dare receive it of her.
Others have felt this; I am not alone.

HELEN.

From the first hour that she came here to this,
No menial service has been asked of her.
When she first came, her youth, her splendid beauty,
Her constant silence, — for she knew no language
Spoken by any here, — and her proud sadness,
Woke in my mother such a blended feeling
Of awe and pity, that she suffered her
To follow her own course in everything:
To come and go, to sit by her and work,

Or wander through the woods, as pleased her best.
She never showed her gratitude in words,
Or even in look, but held towards my mother
The same stern, lofty bearing as to others.
Yet such was her attachment to her mistress,
That, though her own child was not two hours old,
Hecate was with my mother at my birth ;
And, as she since has often told me, hers
Were the first lips that pressed a kiss on mine.

ALICE.

Ah, to you, Helen, she is always gentle.
She is not Hecate, when she speaks to you.

HELEN.

She was my nurse. She has for me the feeling
That these poor women have towards their nurslings :
A love so strong that it sometimes supplants
The love they ought to have for their own children.
It often makes me sorrowful to think
That I, who have so much to make me happy,
Take from poor Perdita the highest good
Her lot could let her know, — a mother's love.
I cannot hide it from myself, that Hecate,
In all else so unlike a slave, has this
In common with the meanest : she is wanting
In love and sense of duty to her child.

ALICE.

To you so fond ! Helen, how beautiful

She is, when her dark eyes rain down on you
Their tenderness! Had she not been a slave,
What might she not have been!

HELEN.

Ah, what indeed! —

[*Helen remains silent for a few moments.*

At least since she has been with us, she has not
Known harshness or injustice. I might say
That in this house she rather rules than serves.
The other servants stand in awe of her
Far more than of their mistress or my father.
Even he allows in her the lofty bearing
He would not suffer in another slave.
And over me, I own it, she has gained
An influence almost equal to a mother's.
No mother could have been more kind, more patient.
How would she watch by me, when I was ill!
The cold, stern Hecate was the gentlest nurse!
The first words that she spoke were said to me.
For two whole years after her coming here,
She uttered not a word in any language;
When suddenly, as if by inspiration,
She could speak English with a purity
Seldom attained by people of her class, —
Even by those who are brought up among us,
And never hear another language spoken.

ALICE.

Her native language is not English, then?
What is it? French?

HELEN.

We do not know. We think
That she speaks English with a Spanish accent.
Yet this, perhaps, may be accounted for:
She may have caught this accent from my mother,
Whose native language, as you know, was Spanish.
Hecate herself maintains a resolute silence
Upon this point, as upon all that could
Help us to find out her true origin.
French she can understand, but cannot speak;
Spanish she does not speak nor understand;
English she speaks, — how well you know, how purely.

ALICE.

What trace there is of foreign idiom
Seems but to give originality
And a peculiar grace to all she says.
She speaks as one might who has learned by reading,
Not by the ear.

HELEN.

Yet, when she came, they say,
She could not read.

ALICE.

And now she reads so well!
How did she learn?

HELEN.

She may have learned with me:
She was by always, when I had my lessons.
I well remember that she used to help me,
And make me say them over in my playtime.
When I was eight years old, she read at least:

She used to read aloud to me for hours.
Since, it has been one of my greatest pleasures
To hear her read, recite, or improvise.

ALICE.

Oh, I remember well her charming tales!
When I was here, if she began to tell one,
I could not keep away, although I feared her.
She had about her a strange fascination!
I felt it, though with as much dread as pleasure.

HELEN.

And I with pleasure only. I would sit
And look on her as on a picture, listen
To her rich voice as to delightful music,
While she recounted stories, half invention
And half remembered fragments, or caressed me
With such a lavish wealth of loving words!
Thus have I known her. — She has other moods.

ALICE.

She only shows to you her lovely side.
But I have seen her under all her phases.
I often make a call at Dorcas' hut; —
That strange old creature has attraction for me; —
There I 've seen Hecate with her own poor daughter;
She is an altered being!

HELEN.

There combined

She sees the guilt and shame of the two races:
Hates her white blood as that of her oppressors,
Loathes the dark blood that makes her child a slave.
But, Alice, oh, how cruel the condition
That could pervert a nature such as hers!

ALICE.

Poor Perdita! the quiet, patient creature!
But for your kindness, I should pity her.
She seems to have no thought but of her duty.

HELEN.

Yes, Perdita at least was born a slave,
And has no wish or hope above her lot.
Hecate asserts her life began in freedom,
And that the man who sold her as a slave
Did so against all right. Her father's death,
Which happened on a journey, suddenly,
Left her, her infant brother, and their mother,
Dependent on the service of a man
Who had come with them from their distant home,
Where he had been their steward. Her poor mother,
Feeble alike with illness and with grief,
In a strange land, speaking a foreign language,
Trusted this man to act for her. He offered
To be their escort to the city whither
Their journey lay, and where they had near friends.
She left to him the arrangements. They arrived,
After a tedious fortnight, late one night,
In a large town. The steward carried them

To a low, dismal tavern in the suburbs;
They were conducted to an upper room;
The door was locked, the key withdrawn. They passed
A sleepless night, divided between fears
And smiling at their fears. They watched with longing
To hear the steward come. It was not day
When the steep staircase creaked with cautious footsteps.
The door was opened, and a woman entered,
Holding a little lamp; four others followed.
Without a word, but with imperious gestures,
They forced poor Hecate and her fainting mother
To dress themselves in coarse, ill-fashioned garments.
A covered wagon took them, thus disguised,
To a large building. After some hours' waiting
In a bare cell whose door was firmly barred,
They were led out into a wide, low hall
Crowded with men, resounding with loud voices.
Here Hecate's hand was wrested from her mother's.
Confused, amazed, she understood no more
What passed before her. It was only later
She knew she had been sold, — she was a slave!

ALICE.

What a strange story! Oh, if it were true!

HELEN.

Her mother's and her little brother's fate
She never learned. All that remained to her
Of her old life was her black waiting-woman,
Who clung to her, and, by a happy chance,

Was bought by the same man, — a needy planter.
His small, remote plantation was shut in
By hills on one side, little naked hills,
And on the other bounded by pine-barrens.
Her life was here as dreary as the landscape.
The master's poverty with double weight
Bears on the slave. But not alone the food
Scanty and coarse, the insufficient clothing,
The harsh refusals and the sharp revilings,
Not these alone made Hecate's misery;
The want of all that nourishes the fancy,
The absence of all beauty, of all change,
Awoke within her a more cruel craving
Than bodily wants can cause. The master's house
Itself was mean and low and poorly furnished.
No trailing vines, no rich o'ershadowing trees
With outward beauty screened the inward bareness.
The wretched negro huts were all alike,
Set in straight rows, and not a shrub or flower
Redeemed their squalor. To that lonely region
No traveller came. Either there were no neighbors,
Or intercourse with them was interdicted:
For no strange face was seen on the plantation,
Unless it were when a new laborer
Came to replace one that was dead or sold.
Hecate has often told me of those years:
Only the pictures that came back to her
Out of her early childhood, as she said,
Enabled her to live and keep her reason.

ALICE.

How came she here?

HELEN.

Upon this planter's death,
The people were sent off and sold. A dealer
Bought Hecate and the girl who came with her
From her first home. He brought her to this State
And offered her for sale. My father saw her
By accident, and bought her for my mother.
The other woman begged so earnestly
Not to be parted from her, that my father
Bought her, too, — that same Dorcas whom you spoke of.

ALICE.

What can we think of this strange tale?

HELEN.

My father
Says Hecate's pride makes her desire to think
Herself free-born: slaves often have this fancy.
Yet he made earnest efforts, for my sake,
To learn the truth; but all without avail.
Hecate herself would give us no assistance.
Her father's name has never passed her lips;
She says she has forgotten it; but, when
I press her, such a fearful agitation
Shakes her whole frame, she looks so wild, so woful,
That I must think she has some hidden motive
To keep it from us, and I cease to urge.
My mother thinks this is sufficient proof

That the whole story is a fabrication,
Or, at the least, a fanciful delusion,
On Hecate's part. She thinks it could not be
A child should thus forget a father's name,
Or, knowing it, in such a case conceal it.

ALICE.

And yet the exiles in Siberia
Sometimes forget their names, though they were sent there
After they were grown men. Why not a child,
Taken so suddenly from all she loved,
Placed in new scenes, new-named in a strange language?

HELEN.

Perhaps, if all be as she says and thinks, —
If she has borne an honorable name, —
She dreads, after so many years' abasement,
To claim her rank and family once more.
What grief, what shame for her, in the return
To her lost home of innocence!

ALICE.

Poor Hecate!

HELEN.

Whether she once were free or born in bondage,
She has in her a sense of dignity
That we do not attribute to the slave.
How my heart bleeds for her, poor, injured creature,
When I think over all she must have suffered!

Here is, no doubt, the secret of her strangeness,
Her varying moods, her coldness to her child.

ALICE.

And is not this susceptibility
Itself a proof that she was born in freedom?
She may be free! She may be even white!
Oh, what a horror, if the case were so!
Such things have happened. I have heard a story
Of a poor boy, light-haired, blue-eyed, they said,
Who was for seven years believed a slave.
He proved to be the child of foreign parents
Who had died suddenly. It was decided
The little fellow was to have his freedom. —
And Hecate has no trace of negro blood;
Nor has her daughter.

HELEN.

But among our servants
Whose origin we know, are some yet whiter.

ALICE.

Yes, — Roxy's grandson, Daffy. Then there 's Chloe;
And there was Minta, and her pretty boy.
Pity they died, poor things! But Dorcas, —
What did she tell you? Did you question her?
Her mind is weak and wandering, — but she might,
Perhaps, remember what passed long ago,
Though she forgets what happened yesterday.

HELEN.

She never could be brought to give an answer
In a straightforward way on any subject.
When questioned about Hecate, she becomes
More vague and wayward even than usual.

ALICE.

The man whose slave she was, you know his name?

HELEN.

It was a common one. The dealer knew it, —
But nothing else about him. Hecate says
His place was in a newly settled State.
She went to it from where she first was sold
By a rough road that seemed interminable :
She could not tell what time the journey took,
It was so full of pain and so unvaried.
After his death, she says she travelled far
To reach the place where she was sold again.
The dealer bought her in the far Southwest,
And she had come there from still farther South.
Vague indications to direct our search !
Then years had passed before she told her story.
She told it, too, not fully and at once,
But first in hints. Then slowly, piece by piece,
Came out the history I have given you.
How much of it is true, and how much fancy,
Or others' story mingled with her own,
It is not easy to decide. At first
I listened to these tales as to the rest,

Finding in them only the hour's amusement;
But later, seeing with how deep a feeling,
What minute details, what consistency
The story was repeated, I began
To see more in it than a woven dream.
I may be wrong, — her strong imagination
Gives such a lifelike color to her pictures.
But I have notes of all that she has told me;
My father has the name of her first master,
And of the man who sold her to himself.
With these, if time and accident — no, if
The overruling hand of Providence
Should offer us one day the guiding clue,
We may explore this mystery. Till now
My efforts have been fruitless.

ALICE.

But, if Hecate
Dreads the discovery, why should you seek
To give her back what she would not regain?

HELEN.

Ah, there is something in us which impels
To work for justice, to defend a right,
Without respect to the first consequences.
And then, though Hecate might not wish for freedom,
She has no right to keep it from her child
And her child's children. But my hope has failed
As years pass on and nothing comes to aid it.
All I can do is to entreat my father
To give her her own freedom and her daughter's.

ALICE.

And he will not consent?

HELEN.

He says it is
Impossible; he could not free her here;
She must be banished to the North, to live
All unprotected in a land of strangers;
She has no means of earning her own bread;
She would be wholly helpless; and her daughter,
Even if the choice were given her, would rather
Remain with us, and die where she was born,
Than venture out in the great world alone.
I know not what to answer to these reasons
Urged by my father; but if——

ALICE.

He is right.
You can do nothing more than you have done. —

[*Alice rises and places the vases of flowers in different parts of the room.*

Look, is it well?

[*Changing the position of a vase.*

No, — this is better here.
Now where is Flora? She can take the rest.

[*The door opens.*

Ah, she is coming.

[*With surprise.*

Hecate!

HECATE, *entering.*

It is I.

HELEN, *to Hecate, who stands looking at her with an anxious, inquiring expression.*

What is it?

HECATE.

Thou art sad.

HELEN.

Come, then, and tell me
Some pleasant tales, such as your fancy weaves them, —
Half real, half fantastic.

HECATE.

And thou canst
Still listen to my idle tales? Dear treasure!
Rose of my desert! Sunbeam to my night!
God has o'erpaid me in bestowing thee!
Yes, I will find for thee the sunniest tales
Of brighter lands than these. No, thou art sad.
To the sad heart the glad tale is unwelcome.
I 'll tell thee, then, of sorrow, — but of such
As cannot come near thee. To my own world,
The world of dreams, I 'll lead thee. Dost thou know —
Thou canst not know what paradise is opened,
When sleep withdraws the veil from that fair land,
For him whose day-life knows nor joy nor rest.
To the o'erblest are given ominous dreams,
Prefiguring change and loss. The troubled sleeper

Struggles to wake, and, having waked, counts over
His blessings, one by one, — assures himself
He still is rich and happy and beloved:
Yet scarce he banishes the haunting shadows.
But on his eyes whom toil and sorrow lead,
Fainting and wan, to pitying sleep's protection,
Rise joy-fraught visions; sweet, consoling tones
Bear to his ear promise of future rest;
All that his life has lost or never known
Comes to enrich it then. Ah, 'mid its bliss,
Already does his heart forebode the waking!
He clings to sleep, but feels her kind embrace
Slowly relax, till, half-incredulous,
He knows himself again, and drearily
Takes up once more the burden of his woes.
Thou happy heart, and

[*Looking at Alice.*

Thou gay bird, perhaps
Your silk-embowered rest has sometimes known
Dark, threatening forms that would not be shut out
By bolts or bars, that were not to be daunted
By all your state?

ALICE.

Oh, often, Hecate, — often!

HELEN.

Ah, you have found, perhaps, the hidden source
Of this day's sadness. A dim, formless vision,
Just at the break of morning, passed before me.
'T was like the shadow of approaching evil,

And rested, as it seemed, upon my child.
I thank thee for reminding me how slight
The cause that waked this tremor. 'T will soon pass.
Thou hast well said, such dreams assail the happy.

HECATE.

And wilt thou know what dreams the wretched have?
Wilt thou look through the slumbers of the slave
And see the world that opens on his night? —
[*To Alice.*
Draw not back, proud one! I 'll not ask of thee
To stoop the snowy pinions of thy soul
To the earth-burrowed nest, to soil their lustre
By contact with ignoble griefs and hopes.
I know too well the placid scorn that dwells
In your high hearts, to ask their sympathy
For the emotions of a sooty breast.
But slavery's yoke has not in all time rested
Only on those predestined to its thrall
By a divine decree. That favored isle
From whose brave sons Freedom elects its champions,
And whose rich life, o'erflowing, quickened here
These vigorous young republics, — that blest isle
Has seen her fair-cheeked children borne away
To serve dark masters under tropic skies.
Of one of these you will not scorn to hear
How, spent with toil, on the unfriendly earth
He sank at eve, and saw, with sickening eye,
The blazing sun of Africa go down.
See where he lies, with straight, gold-dusted hair,

Eyes that still wear the hue of Northern streams,
Cheek that the foreign skies have reddened, not bronzed!
He is a slave. Yet look on him and hear! —

"Sink at last, cruel splendor! fade, pitiless light!
Leave the outcast to sue for the mercy of night!
In the world the day shines on the slave has no part;
Its desires, its affections are strange to his heart.
All around, happy cares that I know not I see;
Bright hopes open near me, — they bloom not for me.
Where I pass, cheerful greetings on kind faces shine;
But no eye seeks an answering welcome in mine.
Of life and of love all things else have their fill;
But my heart must ache on in its loneliness still.
Every low-bending grass-blade, each tremulous spray
Had its own humble share in thy brightness, O Day!
No valley so sunken, no hill-peak so bare,
But awoke to a hope while thy smile rested there!
In all this large bounty no portion for me,
Who could once claim a child's? I am orphaned of thee!

"Thou art here, pale protectress! Before thy cold sway
Must die out the bright tints, the clear voices of day;
Must recede all the mocking enchantments of light!
Oh, how thou art welcome, thou stern, silent Night!
Not thus did I greet thee in earlier days,
When thy dark mantle hid the bright world from my gaze!
How I watched then the sunlight's last lingering gleam,
As it lovingly loitered on woodland and stream!
And, oh, the glad waking! Forth, forth on the lawn,
While the early birds pour forth their hymn to the dawn,

And the gentle flowers, lifting their heads, one by one,
Softly whisper each other their joy in the sun!
The woods put off their slumber; the light morning breeze,
Springing up from its trance, is astir in the trees.
And see how the waves of the willow-watched lake
At the first thrilling touch of the sunbeam awake!
O home once my own! Is the old gladness there?
To thy unestranged children is morning still fair?
Do thy birds carol ever? Thy airs, roving free,
Still bear the sweet errands of meadow and tree?
On thy lake, with the breeze are the billows at play,
As when I last watched them, all careless as they?
Hear me, dear, happy waters! Let one freshening wave
Steal hither and bless the parched lips of the slave!
Lend once more, friendly willows, your sheltering boughs!
Oh, might yet your cool leaflets sweep over my brows!

"Am I heard? am I answered? That low, tender strain!
Do the birds of my land bid me welcome again?
What sky arches o'er me? Does this perfumed air
From the flowers that once knew me a kind greeting bear?
Lo, the willow-trees yonder! The bright lake is near!
The plash of its waters comes soft to mine ear!
My home, and unchanged! Yet an alien I stand
'Mid the birds and the trees and the flowers of my land;
And the dull, heavy tread of the slave prints the sod
Which the bold, rapid step of my free boyhood trod.

Ah, my own cabin home, with its vine-curtained door!
All the old household faces crowd round me once more!
'T is thy voice, my own sister! how welcome, how dear,
Falls the music of kindness again on mine ear!
And these dear circling arms, and this welcoming face!
I am havened once more in a mother's embrace!
Oh, but clasp me, my mother! Thy fond arms enfold
The same loving boy whom they cradled of old!
Take thou back thy poor lost one, all changed though he be,
Yet the same in his childlike reliance on thee!

"But what dark creeping shadow draws ever more near?
Can the curse that has blighted have power o'er me here?
In my home can its withering terrors have part?
Can it reach me when pressed to my own mother's heart?
Ah, so long have I trembled, this unquiet fear
Will cease not from troubling my soul even here!
My mother, the son whose proud right it should be
To shield thee from danger asks safety of thee!
No more mayst thou call me thy noble, thy brave;
For the heart of thy child is the heart of a slave!
Yet do not thou scorn me! all free as thou art,
Deny not the fallen his home in thy heart!
It grows faint, thy fond pressure! Yet clasp me! more near!
Thy face fades from mine eyes, thy voice fails on mine ear!

Oh, yet one look of love! yet one pitying tone!
Alone! with the darkness and silence alone!
Still the same dreary void! still the same wasting pain!
The unloved, the forgotten, is homeless again!

"Not unloved! not forgotten! *Thou* couldst not forget!
Thy heart, my own mother, beats warm for me yet!
As my soul longed for thee, so thy love called on mine;
All my heart's eager yearnings found answer in thine.
Strong is love; strong is grief; the soul's fetters gave way:
On the fond mother's bosom the long orphaned lay.
Yes, thou hast been with me! On this blighted brow
Thy sorrowful eyes looked in love even now.
To thy warm throbbing heart this chilled heart has been pressed,
Thy dear arms have clasped me, thy kind voice has blessed.
We have met! we shall meet! Though, through slow wasting years,
Mine the slave's abject toil, mine the slave's lonely tears,
Thy love, living and watching, shall find me again
Where remaineth a rest for the children of pain.
Mother! no flower that earth bears may lift its bright head
Along the rough pathway my footsteps must tread:
The more dear to my heart shall these hope-blossoms be
I have borne from the dreamland in token of thee!"

HECATE, *to Helen, after a pause.*

The tears are in thine eyes, thou gentle one!

HELEN.

Oh, my poor Hecate! what a depth of grief
Hast thou revealed in these thy fancy's pictures!
Does the remembrance of a happier time
Still live in thee? Dost thou still pine for freedom?
Oh, when I look upon thy heavy sorrow,
Knowing its cause, I have a sense of guilt!
I almost hate myself for being happy!

HECATE.

Think not I envy thee thy radiant life.
Thy happiness is all is left of mine.
Nay, look not sad. Do I not live in thee?
This wasted heart, famished of joy and love,
Drinks in whole draughts of rapture in thy presence.

HELEN.

But tell me, Hecate, dost thou long for freedom?

HECATE.

As tottering age longs back its youth; as snows
That down the mountains rush in muddy torrents
Pine to take back their frozen purity;
As lightning-blasted oaks regret their foliage.
It is a longing which is not of hope,
But the imbecile craving of despair.
No human hand can give me back my freedom:

That is a gift which only God bestows.
Man may deface the work of the divine,
But not restore its wholeness. On my soul
The seal of ignominy has been set. Redemption
Can come to me but from the hand of death.

HELEN, *after a pause.*

Hecate, let not thy thought reproach my father.
Thou know'st he saved thee from a harder bondage;
And when I urged on him thy mournful story,
He left no means untried to learn the truth.
Even now — if there were any room to hope ——
Search well thy memory. Tell me all thou know'st.

HECATE.

All it needs thee to know thou hast already:
Only believe the love I offer thee
Is not the service of an abject heart;
And let no doubt come near my mother's name.

HELEN.

Tell me of her.

HECATE.

She was as fair and slight
As my proud father dark and manly strong.
All in her harmonized: her sweet pale face,
Where only the eyes were rich with light and color;
Her low-toned voice; her softly falling tread,
And the white gossamer that robed her. Flowers
Were her sole jewels; yet her caskets held

The imprisoned fires of Asia's costliest stones.
They only gleamed to glad my infant eyes.

HELEN.

Thy father?

HECATE.

Stern, and honoring only her.
And he was harsh sometimes: the generous oak
Yields a rough hold to the soft-clinging tendrils
Of the fond vine that leans her life on his.
Ah, my sweet mother! when she heard his step,
She looked up with a gentle, asking smile,
To disarm anger, if he came in anger, —
To welcome kindness, if he came in kindness.
Thus I remember her. Alone, she wept
Sometimes, — yes, often; yet I think not more
Than wives are wont. They were not passionate tears;
But tranquil, slowly dropped, as if her grief
Had years enough wherein to spend itself.

HELEN.

She had griefs, then?

HECATE.

What woman has them not?
Even thou, my Helen, turn'st away thine eyes
Before that question, — thou, young wife and mother!
Nay, have no fear that I will probe these wounds.
I know them slight. God grant them never deeper!

HELEN.

God grant them never greater than my strength!
But not for happiness was woman born,
For selfish pleasure, but for something higher.
I feel it here. Hecate, thou hast not erred.
I am no more the gay, all-hoping girl.
Life has now called me to its serious cares.
Already I forebode the sordid griefs
It lays on woman, — and the lofty duties.
For these I will bear those.

HECATE.

Oh, my own Helen!
Yes, not for happiness; for something higher!
I feel and know it in my degradation!
Oh, be thou all I might have been! My soul
Can only dimly now discern the noble;
As faintly, through the mists of time, we seize
The shadowy outlines of a dead friend's features.
But when, on some related face, gleams out
That look, that smile, so loved once, so familiar,
Forth from its night starts the long faded image,
And for a moment stands all living there.
So when thoughts from thy noble soul breathe forth,
Kindred to those of my dead nobleness,
For a brief instant they charm back its phantom! —
Faded, — gone! — I am here, and I am Hecate!

[*Goes.*

[*Helen remains thoughtful. Alice observes her for a moment, then gayly:*

ALICE.

Be what you will. For me, I will be happy.
I 'm not unreasonable. I shall only ask
A handsome fortune, — one that matches mine
Will do; a husband that will let me spend
Just what I please; a very handsome house;
Statues and pictures in it; pretty children, —
Although they do say, to be sure, that children
Too handsome when they 're young will grow up ugly:
But I must have them pretty while they 're little;
What they are afterwards is their affair.

HELEN.

Only to me, my Alice, talk thus lightly,
Who read your heart; I know you have deep feelings.

ALICE.

I do not know it. As I feel, I talk.
There 's one good thing: I am no hypocrite.
I say at once, my husband must be rich:
I have n't the least taste for self-denial.
To risk your life upon some great occasion
Is very well, — if one but come out safe;
But to go every day dressed dowdily,
To wear old-fashioned caps and home-made bonnets,
There 's not a man in the world — at least in ours —
Worth sacrifices and protracted martyrdoms
Like these. No, Helen, — these high-sounding virtues,
Self-sacrifice, and magnanimity,
And strength of soul, and all the rest of them,

Are very well for men. They have their part
To play before the world. They take the worth
Of all their sacrifices out in fame.
But we — what do we ever get by ours?
Who 'll ever know it, if I scorch my face
Stewing preserves, or if I spoil my hands
In starching muslins? If I spend my life
Passing between the nursery and the kitchen,
A perfect heroine in my self-devotion,
Who 'll ever take the least account of it?
And there am I, after a few short years,
An ugly, dowdy, ordinary woman,
Without a thought beyond a stew or stocking.
Who 'll thank me for my worn-out youth and beauty,
My stinted intellect? Perhaps my husband?
Oh, not a bit of it! He 'll see me changed,
And wonder how he ever thought me pretty.
I 've seen it all. I know what I am saying.
I had an aunt who married in the North ——

HELEN.

Your mother's sister?

ALICE.

Yes, — my Aunt Sophia.
I made a visit to her once, and then
I learned what a love-match is. My poor aunt!
They say that she was lovely in her youth,
And never was attachment so romantic
As that between her and her husband, — lover,
I mean, before he had become her husband.

When I first saw her, she was thin and pale,
With anxious eyes shaded by heavy lids:
He was still handsome rather, though too stout.
Could I describe to you that woman's life!
She rose at six o'clock, — it was in winter:
I don't know what time she got up in summer, —
At dawn, no doubt. No sooner up than busy.
First, all the pretty things about the parlor
Were to be dusted by her careful hand:
Servants were not abundant, — and besides,
A breakage was a serious affair.
Then to the work-basket before 't was light.
Shirts were to mend, — when not to make, — and stockings.
One thing got through, there stood another ready.
I said one day, — "And when shall you be done?" —
"Done?" — and she turned on me a wondering look, —
"Done what? this apron?" — "Done with all your work." —
"Never," she said, — and that so placidly!
Then she must hear the younger children's lessons,
Before they went to school, to have them perfect.
She 'd heard the Latin Grammar through so often,
Beginning with the oldest boys, and coming
Down to the youngest, — just in training then, —
That she could listen to the recitation
And never leave her mending: coarse print, fine print,
She knew it all as well as a professor.

HELEN.

Well, then, at least, in giving, she gained instruction.

ALICE.

If she could but have put it to some use!
But no, she never got beyond the grammar.
When they were old enough to do without her,
They went their way, and she began again
The same old story with the younger ones. —
Well, then came breakfast. Just before it came,
The children were admonished to be quiet,
Because papa was coming. Papa came, —
Despatched his breakfast, — read his newspaper, —
Departed for his office. After breakfast,
She washed the breakfast-things and set them up, —
And then to work again. I tried to read
Aloud to her, thinking it quite humane:
But her poor head was so intent on planning
How to make Charley's jackets do for Tommy,
Or how to cut two mantles for the girls
Out of her last-year's cloak, or perhaps only
How to have what remained from yesterday
Made serviceable for another dinner,
That, when I 've read some most pathetic passage,
And my eyes looked for sympathy in hers,
I found that cold, vague, introverted look
Which says the mind, at work within itself,
Is not at home to foreign visitors.
At times, indeed, in some auspicious moment,
I caught her ear, and, through her ear, her heart.
Once taken captive, it made no resistance,
But suffered me to lead it where I would.
Then fell the hateful work; the needle stopped;

The humid eye, melting by turns and kindling,
Gave back the varying passion of the page.
And I read on with tremulous delight,
Dreading the moment that should break the spell,
Take from me my congenial companion,
And leave instead the toiling, careful housewife.
Too soon it came! At once the conscious flush
Springs to her cheek, and quick the guilty hands,
Convicted of a moment's idleness,
Catch self-reproachful at the slighted work,
While the perturbed and hurried eyes send round
Sharp glances to detect what other duties
That season of oblivion has betrayed.

HELEN.

This life seems sad and wearisome indeed;
Yet without doubt it had its compensations.

ALICE.

I don't know what they were. I saw her life,
How it wore by. One day was like another.
You think, perhaps, she found them in her children?
In the elder possibly; they were from home.
The younger were a set of little Pickles.
When they came home from school, there was a time
To get their hands and faces washed for dinner!
And then their lessons were to hear once more!
My uncle came again at three o'clock,
But left his soul behind him at his office,
Musing a law-case. His material form,

Having reinforced itself, rejoined the spirit. —
The afternoon was very like the morning:
A scene of busy cutting, making, mending,
Varied by short excursions to the kitchen.
But then the evening was her holiday,
Perhaps you think? A heavy holiday!
About as gay as a New England Sunday!
The children sat apart to con their lessons,
Each with his little lamp and little table.
At intervals one or the other came
Across the room, on tiptoe, to obtain
A whispered explanation from his mother.
Except this, and the ticking of the clock,
The crackling of the fire, the gentle rustling
Of my aunt's dress, as flew her nimble needle,
And now and then a deep sonorous hem
From my portly uncle, not a sound disturbed
The more than churchlike stillness; for the children,
Untamed as colts when only with their mother,
Were grave as owlets when papa was there.
But if, in some forgetful moment, words
Above the breath, or an ill-smothered laugh,
Broke out from them, the conscience-stricken mother
Lifted her eyes to meet her husband's look
And intercept the blame it carried in it.
Those evenings seemed to me without an end.
I hailed the hour of general dispersion
That brought me freedom, — me, not her: she sat
Till one o'clock over her mending-basket.

HELEN.

Why did you go to stay so long a time?

ALICE.

To tell the truth, it was a punishment.
You know I was so thoroughly spoiled! My mother
Thought it would do me good to pass six months
Under this roof of struggle and privation.
It did me good. I learned a lesson there
That I shall profit by.

HELEN.

Was she depressed
And sad?

ALICE.

My aunt? She never seemed to know
She was n't the happiest woman in the world!
I asked myself, was it stupidity?
Or was it something quite beyond my ken?

HELEN.

This life of self-devotion had rewards
That human eye saw not. Believe it, Alice.

ALICE.

What was unseen I cannot estimate.
The visible rewards were somewhat scanty.
The children took it as a thing of course
That she should toil and moil and watch for them.
I do believe her sons had loved her better,

If they had seen her pretty and well-dressed,
Than as it was, with all her sacrifices.
I told her so one day, in my blunt way.
She answered gently, — "Yes, perhaps they might
Have loved me more: I should deserve it less."
She did not miss their thanks. To take her kindness
Was to do her one. — I remember once
I saw her thoughts turned back upon herself:
But for a moment, though. It was one Sunday:
We had all been to church: the preacher's text was,
"Her children arise up and call her blessed."

HELEN.

Oh, Alice, I can never hear that verse
But my heart swells! You talk of fame, of glory!
What glory ever filled the soul with rapture
Like that which must o'erflow the mother's being
Whose children call her blessed?

ALICE.

Well, my uncle
At dinner-time said to the youngest boy,
"What did you hear at church?" — "We heard a sermon
About a mother who was very good." —
"Like yours," my uncle said. These simple words
Showed him less unobservant than he seemed.
I never knew before he felt her value.
It seemed to be a new thing to her, too:
A flush of glad surprise suffused her cheek;
Tears, half of pleasure, half of penitence,

Pressed to her eyes. It seemed she asked herself,
Had she deserved this praise? and gleams of joy
And shades of sadness, alternating, flitted
Over her face, to which its youth came back
For a brief moment, and then fled again,
Leaving it only gentler still and humbler.
Her husband, though, saw nothing of all this:
He ate his dinner in the utmost calm.

HELEN.

You must have loved your aunt: you would not else
Have learned to read her feelings in her face;
You would not else have been so jealous for her,
And thought she was not valued at her worth.

ALICE.

Oh, yes, I loved her, — love her memory.
I thought her life preposterous, but I loved her. —
I asked her once, how could a mind like hers
Content itself amid such vulgar cares,
Trouble itself about such petty savings?
I was a child, and could ask anything.
She said: "We have to educate our children.
I have myself no means of earning money:
I can but save it. If I were more lavish,
If I allowed myself a life of ease,
Either our boys must want advantages
I would not have them want, or else their father
Must doubly toil, and wear out soul and strength.
This thought supports me: every cent I save

Is so much care and labor spared to him.
Then, if my spirit flags, I rouse it up
With thinking on the future of my sons.
I see them with their father's eloquence
And all his gifts, joined to my" —— "Self-devotion,"
I added, as she sought some humbler word.
"My industry, to my one humble merit,
My legacy to them: all other talents
They will inherit from the father's side."
She never lost faith in her husband's genius.
Success and fame did come to him at last:
But she was in her grave, and never knew it.

HELEN.

Her hopes for him were answered. And her children,
Have they not well repaid her cares and efforts?
Her eldest son already has a name
Honored by all whose suffrage is an honor;
The second son, young as he is, has gained
A rank among our greatest poets. Few
So happy as this humbly toiling woman!
She died, — but died with all her ends accomplished.

ALICE.

No, not accomplished; or she did not know it.

HELEN.

She had foreknown it: the religious heart
Confides more in the promises of faith
Than in the evidence of mortal senses.

ALICE.

Oh, could she but have lived a little longer!
The grave had hardly closed on her, when all
Turned out exactly to her wish: her husband
Prosperous at last; her children something more.

HELEN.

Yes, she said well: they have their father's powers
And hers united. Not a generous work,
Not a just cause, but has their advocacy,
And given with that heartfelt eloquence
That finds the answering chords in other hearts.
These noble brothers! what a part is theirs!
One from the sacred desk gives forth with power
The teachings of eternal truth; the other,
Not less a preacher of the inspired word
That imposition of no human hands
Devolved this office on him, gives to earth
The sacred oracles in strains as lofty
And spirit-stirring as the ancient prophets:
Wrong shrinks before his voice, and trampled right
Makes good its claims, at least in human hearts. —
He is a benefactor of the earth
Who makes two grass-blades grow where grew but one:
How much more he who generous emotions
Calls forth in torpid minds! who makes the waste
Of rude, uncultured hearts to blossom out
In genial virtues! — How I thank you, Alice,
For sketching me the life of this dear woman!
Well, I believe no sacrifice is lost,

But each just aim, if steadfastly pursued,
Is reached at last, — that even the silent efforts
Of earnest hearts have value before God,
And work the good they strive for. Yet we all
Have need sometimes to fortify our faith.
The example of such efforts and such triumphs
Cheers and inspires.

ALICE.

I wonder at you, Helen!
You, with your gifts, your splendid powers, your beauty, —
You take example, you draw strength from one
Good, gentle, patient, all ways praiseworthy,
But no more fit to be compared to you
Than a poor rushlight to the evening star!

HELEN.

Alice! God has indeed heaped blessings on me,
And made my trials — can I call them trials? —
So light they hardly leave me room for merit.
When I compare my life with the existence
Of some poor toiling woman, the rewards
My slightest effort finds with the sparse gains
That pay her ceaseless labors, — smiles and thanks
And amplest recognition compensating
The smallest sacrifice I make for others,
While her sad life's monotonous toils and pains
Nor sympathy nor gratitude makes sweet, —
When I compare myself with such a woman,
I feel, with a profound humility,
How much her life is nobler, higher than mine.

But, if there be a woman who deserves
More veneration than these humble martyrs,
Is it not she who, bred in luxury
Mental and physical, and versed in all
That makes life beautiful and rich and graceful,
Can yet accept with a courageous patience
The cares, devoid of dignity and charm,
Of a restricted, sordid, household life, —
Who, with the tastes and wants that culture gives,
Condemns herself to mental poverty
That others may be rich? Believe me, sister,
These silent sacrifices are of those
That before God have worth. These are the women
Who, with their humbler sisters of the poor,
Keep, in our time, uninjured the tradition,
The ideal of womanhood.

ALICE.

I grudge them not their honors!
Offer me power or glory worth the having,
I 'd make, perhaps, the needed sacrifices
To win it. But I cannot hope for either.
Our age, our country only grant to women
Distinction in a petty sphere, through wealth
Displayed in house and dress and equipage.
And wherefore kick against the pricks? I aim
Only at what I see within my reach.

HELEN.

The things which lie within our reach are often
More worth than the far-sought. And are you sure

There are no higher duties left for women
Than to display on dress and furniture
The wealth that others' industry provides?

ALICE.

Oh, educate their children, scold their servants,
Smile when a husband sulks; all said in one:
Domestic virtue! I 've no taste for it.
Or let me be a heroine, or be nothing!

HELEN.

The heroines of the past, who have bequeathed us
What we possess of ease and dignity,
Suffered and toiled unknown and unregarded.
Their noble patience, their sublime forbearance
Guarded the sacred ties of home and kindred
From violent rupture, until their protection
Became the common care of cultured man,
And, sanctified by habit, passed to law.
This work is done. But shall we rest supine?
The task of woman will not be accomplished,
Until, throughout the world, the law of love
Supplant the law of force, — until the bonds
That join a loving family together,
Making their joys, griefs, aspirations one,
Hold all the children of the common Father.

ALICE.

You do not count, I fear, among your great
The "illustrious women," those who "raised themselves

Above their sex," as the historians tell us:
That is to say, did almost as much mischief
As if they had been men. These war-makers
Are not your heroines, I suppose.

HELEN.

As little
As, in our own time, are those errant women
Who think to imitate the faults of men
Is to be sharers in their privileges.
Not these; but those who have the force to live
Faithful to duty, duty absolute:
Not asking whether men perform their part,
But working out their own as unto God.
What the strong women of the elder time
Endured and did, unknowing their own work, —
What they began without support and singly,
Following the law of God within their hearts,
We must fulfil with higher consciousness,
With deeper insight, and with greater concert.
The incentives that men need to urge them on
Are wanting, it is true, to woman: fame,
Power, wide-spread influence, even the honest pleasure
Found in free use of noble faculties,
These are denied to her. Restrained and cramped
In all her outward acts, she cannot know
The joys of self-possession, — man's great bliss;
She only claims those of renunciation.

ALICE.

Claims? I withdraw my claim, for one!

HELEN.

Yes, *claims*
The glorious privilege of God's commissioned:
The right to live and work for others' good,
Requiring no return. This right the humblest
May claim; nor let the most endowed renounce it.
If God bestows high gifts upon a woman,
'T is for His service, and His service only.
Let her not lift her head to meet the laurels
Men offer to their great, but, humbly stooping,
Incline it to the crown of martyrdom.
Thus did the faithful of the early time,
Unseen, unpraised, and only dimly knowing
Their sorrow was to work out others' good. —
Alice, what wastes of woe the mind runs over,
As through man's history it traces back
The destiny of woman! Think what grief
Wrung those strong hearts that, generous to the selfish,
To the false constant, to the brutal kind,
Broke not, revenged not! For one faithless Helen,
One Clytemnestra who paid crime with crime,
And earned a name with men, how many firm,
Heroic hearts in stillness bore, returning
Kindness for wrong, and hardly knew it wrong,
So raised above the consciousness of self
And self's deserts were they! There are who call
These resolute, devoted women slaves!

ALICE.

And were they not? I should have called them so.

HELEN.

The service they gave was not slavish service.
We know what that is. Self-control, forbearance,
Persistence, silent exercise of duty,
Are these the attributes of servitude?
No, — of free-will those generous hearts and strong
Gave without stint their wealth and energy.
Not servants they, but liberal benefactors!
Then first the woman sinks to the dependant,
When, giving up her right to self-devotion,
She seeks her ease, and strives in trifling pleasures
To dissipate the energies that fret
And waste her soul, supine in idleness;
Then, when, instead of giving, she asks; then, when
She puts her weakness forward as a pretext
For duties unfulfilled, by flattery seeking,
And feigned abasement, to usurp a power
For selfish ends, which, wielded for the highest,
She might possess of right; then, when, a traitor
To man, and to the Heaven-planted instinct
That makes him see in her a second conscience,
She gives him the reflection of his thought,
And not the word God printed on her soul.
The poor and lowly hold their office still:
They toil and bear as ever. But the others,
Who, for a higher work, are left exempt
From manual drudgery, how do they fulfil
The task appointed them? A fearful question,
Which we shall all one day be called to answer!

ALICE.

If all can answer with as clear a conscience
As you can, well for them!

HELEN.

Oh, Alice, no!
To be beloved is sweet. I would not lose
Your dear affection. But what merit have I
Even in the qualities you love in me?
They are a gift accorded like my wealth.
What have I done, what have I borne, to earn
Or what I have or what I am? It must be,
Alice, it must be God has duties for me:
I even think I can discern the path
He has ordained for me; now only dimly;
But light will come. My life is in its morning.
I but begin to understand myself
And judge the world about me. I have passed
Childhood and youth in happy dreams. The real
Calls on me now; I hear its serious voice.
This much is clear: in placid idleness
I cannot rest, while round about me lies
A world of want and ignorance and pain;
My soul demands to labor in God's vineyard.

ALICE.

Have you not done so? Have you not shed blessings
Where'er your look has fallen? If your power
Were equal to your will, you would have made
An earthly paradise of your plantation.

You have done all but the impossible.
Content yourself, for you have done enough.

HELEN.

Enough to show me that I have done nothing:
At best a tending of the sickly branches,
While safe below a worm corrodes the root.
God takes not from us superficial service:
We must give all, or we have given nothing.

ALICE.

Oh, to what heights of virtue would you soar?
I half forebode. But do you hope to drag
My brother Herbert with you to the summit?

HELEN.

His heart, his mind, have slept, perhaps, till now, —
Like mine.

ALICE, *aside.*

Have slept, — but not like yours!

HELEN.

To him
Will come the hour of waking, as to me.
He, too, will feel the need to try his powers.
His heart is generous, his spirit high.
Have you forgotten with what zeal, what courage,
He took the part of that poor, helpless man,
Unjustly held a slave?

ALICE.

No; I remember. —

[*Aside.*

And so much penetration as she has,
Yet does not see what I could see so plainly!
One half his zeal was nothing but resentment
Against a man who 'd given him offence;
The other and the best half was desire
To please herself; — and it did more to win her
Than his vows or her father's arguments.

HELEN, *smiling.*

He even overcame the indolence
That my reproaches had assailed in vain.
How hard he worked! Oh, he has energy!
He only wants an object and an impulse.

ALICE, *aside.*

You will suggest the first and give the last.
Dear simpleton, how easily I read you!
But you are now his wife, — not yet to win.
So wise she is, so little worldly-wise!

HELEN.

These will not fail. Alice, what happiness,
If I could labor hand in hand with Herbert
For a great cause!

ALICE.

If!

HELEN.

I am not impatient.
I shall not try to carry him by storm.
I am content to work obscurely, slowly,
Alone, if so it must be, — but beginning
What other hands, more strong, more free, will finish.
What patience can, and what a resolute will,
Tempered by meekness and by gentleness,
That will I offer to the cause of right.
But, oh, with him! if I might work with him!
Then no conflicting duties in my heart
Would waste my strength, no hampering doubts restrain;
My whole self I could render. Oh, how welcome
Toil, reproach, danger, would he let me dare them,
And dare them with me!

ALICE.

Herbert!

HELEN.

Is not truth,
When spoken by a loved and loving voice,
Powerful? And has not manly courage often
Received its impulse, manly intellect
Its inspiration, from a woman's heart?

ALICE.

Enjoy your dreams: and yet they are but dreams,
Like those your childhood and your early youth
Pleased themselves with. These, in their turn, will yield

With passing years to a new set of visions.
Oh, woman's dearest, truest friend is Fancy!
How could we bear our dreary lot without her?
She makes the whole world free to our cramped childhood;
She gives our youth noble, chivalric lovers;
She fills our tame, eventless lives with action,
When, in our strength, the impulse to accomplish
Spurs us, as men. Leave them realities, —
Their real toil, too real disappointments!
Give us the unreal that compensates all!

HELEN.

Fancy! I, too, have known that sweet misleader, —
Have wandered through her flowery paths, have breathed
The lulling airs of her enchanted realm.
I, too, have soothed the longing of my soul
With imaged deeds, inane activity.
My soul awakes, and dreams content no more.

ALICE.

Leave me my portion in the realm of visions! —
O shadowy land, more true for us thy shadows,
More satisfying, than the world of substance!
Oh, never shut us from thy refuge! There
Is our true home, our lost inheritance.
In thee as yet the woman is unfallen:
She stands erect and lifts her gaze to heaven, —
To a just heaven, that rewards her faith,
Nor leaves to generous hopes and kindly deeds
The blight of failure and ingratitude.

No discord in thy regions, no frustration!
The fairy blossoms yield their fairy fruit,
The imaged purpose finds ideal fulfilment;
All tends in order to its destined end.
Why art thou not the true world? Harmony
And sequence, are not these the law? Disorder,
Strife, and confusion, are not these negation?
It is so dear to live in truth and freedom!
Why must thy pure and heaven-lighted realm
Alternate for us with a baser world?

HELEN, *taking her hand tenderly.*

Alice, these glimpses of a higher life,
These transient flights to heaven, are granted us,
Not that we should despise our earthly homes,
And turn, reluctant, from our task-work here,
But that with clearer faith and firmer courage
We should confront our duty, — bravely striving,
Each in the measure of his strength, to make
The real world conform to the ideal.

ALICE.

You feel within yourself the force to strive
Even for the unattainable. I do not.
I will still dream myself to bliss, to power, —
Attaining in one rapid flight the goal
Others may toil for through the dusty road
And never come the nearer. And you, Helen,
Will find this is but a more lively dream.
I have had some myself that seemed like earnest,
But they have faded like the rest.

HELEN.

No dream, —
Nor altogether joyful and contenting,
Like Fancy's magic work. Severe it stands, —
An earnest purpose, but a human purpose,
Subject to cross, delay, and disappointment.

ALICE.

Be what you will, do what you will, my Helen,
I only ask to love you, not to follow.
Godspeed upon the path I shall not tread! —
I go. I see you need repose. Besides,
Your mother will be jealous, if I stay
Longer with you. Oh, yes!

[*Archly.*

I know, I know!

[*Goes.*

HELEN, *alone.*

She, his adopted sister, doubts of him!
Turn not that way, my thoughts! No, — he is good
And true and generous. He is very young,
And so am I. We will grow up together:
With every day shall see our duties clearer;
With every day gain greater strength for them. —
Why is it, when I look toward our future,
That over hopes that should be brightest, dearest,
The shadow of so deep a sadness falls?
Without my choice, unsubject to my will,
Through my heart wander mournful melodies,
Like the sad sighing of a wind-swept lyre.

Is it foreboding? false the prophecy
That this same heart has made me until now?
Am I of those whose offered sacrifice
Is not accepted? Shall I live in vain?
Not mine the resolute effort, final triumph,
But that most sorrowful of mortal dooms,
Abortive toil, and pain without result?
Not this! not this! Oh, any fate but this! —

[*After a few moments, fervently.*

Whether God call on me to do or bear,
I only pray my hour may find me ready!

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

AFTERNOON.

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

AFTERNOON.

SCENE I.

A part of the grounds from which the house is visible through the trees; on the other side, a cluster of negro huts. Enter WOODFORD, *a pale, care-worn man, with thin, gray hair.*

WOODFORD.

This is the place; but I see no one yet.
That is the mansion over there. Rich people.
There 's the slaves' quarter. Not a soul about, —
Not even a child. It is n't Sunday, is it?
No, the coach comes on Thursday. It is Friday.
'T was on a Friday —— Never mind, — leave that!
I 'm going to do the best I can. — If only
I could find somebody to speak a word to! —
What shall I ask? Why, first for some refreshment.
And, as I take it, I 'll find how the land lies.
I can take time enough. I 'm not known here. —
'T is Friday, is it? Have n't I always said
I 'd not begin another job on Friday? —
Well, have the other days been luckier?

And then, *that* was n't luck. 'T was Satan's tempting
Brought that about. — Perhaps he 's at it now!
He wants his pay, and I 'm brought here to give it!
Shall I back out? No, fool! It is the fever
Still flickering round my brain. All these queer fancies
Are come of that. — But this fixed resolution
To undo what I 've done, that 's not the fever.
No, that is something else. Wherever 't came from,
It 's strong and steady, — does not come and go
Like sick-bed whims, but pricks and urges always. —
But they were awful, though, those fever phantoms!
God, let them not come back! I 'll keep them off,
If a good life can do it. The first step
In my new path I 'm taking now. — How many
Years is it now since then? Why, almost thirty!
Thirty! 'T is late! The girl was ten years old:
Hard upon forty now. The babe a man.
The mother — if I find her — over sixty.
Well, how these thirty years have slid away!
Hard, bitter years, too, most of them, in passing, —
But to look back upon, a misty dream!
And all the time I 've partly known 't would come
To this at last: but never found the day
Until this day. And now it seems as if
My penitence had followed straight my sin,
And that, the deed scarce done, I can undo it.
Not so! not so! The thirty years are there! —
What 's that?

[*A harsh laugh is heard. Woodford turns and sees* DORCAS, *who comes out from behind a clump of trees.*

DORCAS.

Well done! and so you 're here at last!

WOODFORD.

You know me, then?

DORCAS.

Know you? Do you know me?

WOODFORD.

No. — Should I know you? — Surely 't is not ——

DORCAS.

Surely!

Surely as you are advertised in hell,
My name is pasted up with yours. You 've had
A mighty running spell of many years.
But they 're upon your track! They 'll hunt you down!
No need for me! When you go home, I 'll follow.

WOODFORD.

Is all this real? Mad old hag, speak plainer!
Are you, or are you not ——

DORCAS.

I am Pamela, —
Your slave, your tool once, as you thought. Your tempter
Now know me, your employer! 'T was through me,
The Devil, our master, sent through me his order
To you, his meaner servant. Was it so?

I spoke no word, I looked no look, but sent
Straight from my heart the project into yours.
Did you not struggle at first to keep it out?
Did it not creep, and creep, and wind itself,
And make itself a home? Ah, was it so?
And even when housed, had it not hid itself,
And dwelt in the dark, torpid with shame and fear,
If only your poor strength had nourished it?
Did you not feel the courage more than yours
That braced you? not know strange the energy
That, in the rapid moment of decision,
Gave the quick spur to your uncertain will?

WOODFORD, *aside.*

Which of us is the mad one?

DORCAS.

Mine the deed.
Mine the reward. What have you won by it?
Were you made richer by your stolen wealth?
Were you made happier? Do not answer me.
I know as well as you. I 've followed you.
I 've seen how your tormented, anxious brain
Refused to do for you its former work,
Leaving the duper to become the dupe.
I 've known the quailings of your feeble heart,
And held you at a distance by my will.
Had you not been here sooner without that?
Look at me, man! This is not now the form
That woman wore whom you thought your accomplice:

Yet not unknown to you this haggard face,
Nor do these wild eyes now first look in yours.
Have they not watched your bed and met your waking?
Is not this shrivelled hand the same that pointed
Its menacing finger at your traitor lips
That sleep had half unsealed? Is not this voice
Known the familiar haunter of your dreams?
Speak not! I know! When your look fell on me,
It saw made real a phantom of the night.
I know what purpose brings you here to-day.
You have tracked out your victims. You have come
To learn the issue of your crime; to offer —
If without too much danger — late atonement.

WOODFORD.

Oh, late indeed! If only not too late!

DORCAS.

Of that you shall be judge.

WOODFORD, *aside.*

That hideous smile! —

[*Aloud.*

Is death beforehand with my slow repentance?

DORCAS.

Death was beforehand even with my vengeance.
The woman who had wronged me, she who called
Upon her own and on her children's head
The doom of which you were the instrument,

Had hardly lifted to her lips the cup
My hatred offered, ere she sank away
And passed beyond my reach.

WOODFORD.

And she had wronged you,
That gentle woman?

DORCAS.

She had wronged me basely.
That is no interest of yours. Ask on
Of what concerns you.

WOODFORD, *aside.*

So the mother died.
Poor soul! poor soul! She had been dead ere this,
In any case, — she had such feeble health.
And then my task is easier as it is.
The children will not recollect. — Let 's see.
My name appeared not. I took all precautions.
I may, perhaps, repair, and not confess. —
[*Aloud.*
And — and the boy? What can you tell of him?

DORCAS.

Nothing of him. My child was not a boy.

WOODFORD.

Nothing? He is not here? — The most important!

DORCAS.

To you perhaps, but not to me. The girl
Stood in the place of mine. I stuck to her.
It was her fate I wished to live upon.

WOODFORD.

They were not kept together?

DORCAS.

Surely not.
Why should they be? We were not kept together,
My child and I. And even if they had been,
They had been parted now at all events.
You did not look to find a full-grown man
Tied to his sister's apron-string or mine?

WOODFORD.

Ah, to be sure! And you can give no clue?

DORCAS.

How should I give one? Do I read the papers?
Do I attend the auctions? Do I deal
In human flesh that never injured me?
You that are always buying and selling should tell
Each other what you want to know, not bother
Those that don't mix themselves in your affairs. —
[*Aside.*
What matter is the boy? Why don't he ask
About things worth the knowing?

WOODFORD, *aside.*

I must search.
Without the boy how can I make a stir? —
[*Aloud.*
The girl? She lives?

DORCAS.

She lives.

WOODFORD.

And here?

DORCAS.

And here.

WOODFORD.

What has her fate been? — Has she a kind — mistress?

DORCAS.

A kinder mistress than she is a servant.

WOODFORD.

What does that mean?

DORCAS.

She is not over useful.
Her free blood boils in her.

WOODFORD.

It is not quelled
After so many years?

DORCAS.

It had been so,
Perhaps, if she had stayed where you first left her.
That had been well. And yet what is is better.

WOODFORD.

How came she here?

DORCAS.

By Satan's work, and mine.
You know what house this is?

WOODFORD.

A Mr. Stanley's.

DORCAS, *aside.*

That 's all he knows. —

[*Aloud.*

Right. —

[*Aside.*

All he need to know! —

[*Aloud.*

How did you come to find us out?

WOODFORD.

I learned
You had been sold to somebody named Stanley.
I 've searched the country over for the Stanleys.
This is the third.

DORCAS.

The right one. Now ask on.
I 'm here to answer. *Is her mistress kind?*
You 've asked and I have told you. Ask the rest.

WOODFORD.

Has she — is she — has she been married?

DORCAS.

No.

WOODFORD.

I breathe! At least that 's well!

DORCAS.

Well that her child
Has ne'er a father?

WOODFORD.

Child? She has a child?

DORCAS.

And that child one. — Well, is atonement easy?
If 't were, you 'd not been here. Is pardon easy?

WOODFORD, *aside.*

Not even human pardon! The divine
How shall I win? Atonement is denied!

DORCAS.

Go seek the boy, if your sin prick too sharp.

Your tardy penitence may profit him.
He can be cleansed. His shame will slip from him,
With the slave's name, like a snake's cast-off skin.
But as for these, though you heaped proof on proof,
Their friends would never find it clear enough:
They 'd sooner leave them as they are than own them.

WOODFORD, *aside.*

She says the truth. I 'll find the boy alone.
I cannot help these. If I save but one,
It will be much. I shall have done my best.

DORCAS.

Go seek the boy. You have your story ready:
You are the faithful steward, who, escaping
By miracle from shipwreck, mourned as dead
His master's family, — until, by chance
Coming years afterward to a suspicion
That all had not been lost, searched out the matter,
And found that the poor, foreign, orphan children
Had been confounded with the straying negroes.

WOODFORD, *aside.*

Does her mind give back mine, or do my thoughts
Spring from her brain, that thus she mimics me?

DORCAS.

Go seek the boy. And yet think well! Sharp scent
Will follow up the traces you point out.
Not life alone, nor freedom, is in question, —

But house and lands ; and these wake keen debate.
They will not take his birth upon your word ;
And tracking out his history inch by inch,
Think you they 'll miss your part in his adventures, —
In his and theirs ?

WOODFORD, *aside.*

She 's right. Concealment would
Be fruitless, and would take from me all merit.
No ! — total silence, or a full disclosure !
A full disclosure, — that will be the shortest !
And seeing that I am not forced to this,
But come of my free will to offer it,
They will not be too hard on me, old man
As I am now and tottering to the grave.

DORCAS.

I charge you, think before the step is taken !
She 's dead, the feeble one. She might have pardoned,
In pity of your suffering, and in thanks
Even for her children's late deliverance.
But think you those who 're ousted for their sake
And forced to own relations that disgrace them
Will overflow with gratitude to you ?
They 'll vent, in form of judgment on your crime,
Their rage at you for trying to repair it.

WOODFORD, *aside.*

What would that judgment be ? A prison ? — Death !
I could have borne imprisonment ; but death —

I cannot face it, — my crime half redeemed, —
Perhaps not that.

DORCAS.

Look well before you leap!
You 'll only run your neck into the noose,
And give no help to those you die for.

WOODFORD, *aside.*

Die?
I cannot die! Oh, I must have more time!
I must consider. I must look about me.
I 'll search the boy out, and determine after.

DORCAS.

They 'll take your guilt at your own word. Not so
The rights of those you wronged. These will but find
Their lot more bitter as audacious claimants
Than as submissive servants. Let them be.
What 's done is done.

WOODFORD, *aside.*

For me, as well as them!
No hope for them, and no return for me!

DORCAS.

For you, as well as them!

WOODFORD.

And yet repentance ——

DORCAS.

Repentance! Was not Judas penitent?
Did he not offer back the thirty pieces?
And did that hinder Satan's getting him?
Weak fool! there is no safety in repentance:
It is in courage and in obstinacy.
I 'm safe. I know I 'm Satan's, and obey him.
He aids me here, and on the other side
Has a snug corner ready waiting for me.
You would call God your master and serve Satan;
And so you anger both and get but blows
And curses from both sides, no pay from either. —
But you are what you are, and cannot mend it!

WOODFORD.

Leave me! I am on earth still, and the demons
Have no right yet to haunt me!

DORCAS.

And no power?

WOODFORD.

Must I still bear this burden?

DORCAS.

You must bear it
Until I bid you lay it down.

WOODFORD, *with sudden anger.*

Till *you?*

DORCAS.

Smooth out your eyebrows. I 'm the head. You did
The work I gave you. You would threaten me!
What can you do to me, for whom life has
No hopes, and death no fears? 'T is you that tremble,
Knowing in me the owner of your secret!

WOODFORD, *aside.*

Has she, perhaps, intention to forestall me,
And rob me of the merit of repentance? —
[*Aloud.*
I wronged you once, 't is true. I broke my promise.

DORCAS.

I never had expected else of you.
If I had wanted what you promised me,
I had found means to make you keep your word.
It was not freedom I desired, but vengeance.
You gave me what I sought. You 're safe from me,
Unless you threaten. That I bear not. I 'm
Wiser than you, have better friends and stronger.
Even the good the angels can't protect,
If I, poor Dorcas, set about their ruin.
It seems that the God Christ has little power
Upon this earth. He pays his debts in heaven.
But mine is prince of this world and the lower.
You have no aid nor helper here nor yonder.

[*Dorcas goes, waving her hand with a gesture of disdain.*

WOODFORD.

The torturing hag! her power is more than earthly!
When I walked hither in the pleasant morning,
It almost seemed that peace awaited me
Under the shade of these tall trees, that stretched
Their friendly arms as if inviting me
To a still sanctuary where my soul
Would find itself delivered from its guilt.
Oh, mockery! This is no sacred grove,
Or to avenging furies dedicated. —

O gentle mother! who, in our still home
Lying away amid New England hills,
Once laid together my infant hands in prayer!
O rigid father! who accounted crime
A Sunday laugh, a truant hour from school!
O timid sister! bold, through love of me,
To win the pardon of my childish sins!
Well that the grass is growing on your graves! —
O childhood scenes! O youthful joys and griefs!
Why do you lift your tender images,
More torturing than memories of crime,
Before my sullied, shrinking soul? Hence! hence!
Leave me to fiends whom I give hate for hate!
But take away those cruel loving eyes
That madden me with their sad tenderness! —
Come back, accomplice of my guilt! come back!
You I can look on! — Bring your maledictions,
My victims! I can bear your presence better
Than solitude possessed by grieving spectres

That point me to my time of innocence! —
They have dispersed before that invocation.
The gentler demons shrink before the fiercer.
Remorse awakes, and keen-eyed Retribution,
Watching secure, with menacing eyes, its prey.
Familiar fiends! and how exorcise you?
You flit not, frightened like the milder phantoms.
There are no stronger demons left to summon.
What spell has power with you, O grim companions?
Once more the oracle within my heart,
Not cheeringly, but sternly now, makes answer:
Atonement! — word of hope once, — of despair,
Of condemnation now. Again, *Atonement!*
Is there hope still, then? Would the hidden voice,
That seems the voice of my most intimate self,
Mock me with falsehood? Yet how make atonement
For guilt whose fruit admits no remedy?
If to repair stand not within thy power,
Then cleanse thy soul at least by expiation.
By expiation! It must come to that! —
Not yet! not yet! — Oh, cowardice! oh, weakness!
No, — I must struggle more, must suffer more,
Before my feeble, vacillating will
Resolve at last to end my spirit's torture
By expiation, — fruitless for my victims! —
Will even expiation be accepted? — Selfish,
Perhaps, this haste to set my soul at ease.
Let me think calmly. Who would make a search
For the lost boy so zealously as I should?
Who with such chances of success as I?

I will put off the moment of confession
Till I have found him out. His wretched sister
Can never be more lost than now. Forth, then,
On this new quest! I shall at least have respite
While the search lasts.
And now let me retreat
By the same road I came. — 'T is fortunate
I have been seen by no one but Pamela.
They would not know me. No, — but they might read
A guilty secret written on my face.

[*He disappears among the trees, looking about him cautiously.*

AFTERNOON.

SCENE II.

A negro cabin. PERDITA *seated near a bed on which lies a dead child. She chants in a subdued tone.*

PERDITA.

There liest thou low, my own sweet, blighted flower!
No care of mine can make thee bloom again!
Passed from my life is that dear, transient joy, —
The sole that opened on this path of pain!

But thou, pure being! some far, happy land
Has surely won thee to its golden bowers!
While here my heavy heartbeats count the time,
Lightly for thee flit by the laughing hours!

Were it but so! dearest, I would not ask
Thee back to pain, could I but know thee blest!
Alas! alas! I see a pallid shade
Wandering through space and nowhere finding rest!

To the proud heaven of thy father's sires
Dar'st thou, poor trembling one, thy look to raise?
In vain! in vain! their cold blue Saxon eyes
Look sternly down upon thy pleading gaze!

Stand'st thou a suppliant near the dusky land
Where Africa's swart sons their Eden hold?

No room for thee! They read thy alien blood
On thy pale cheek and locks of waving gold.

Oh, everywhere repelled! In God's wide world
Hast thou no home? Does heaven deny its joy?
Is there no bosom pitiful and kind
To fold thee till I come, my outcast boy?

Ah, there is One who trod this earthly path
With bleeding feet,—who knew our grief, our shame!
He was rejected and despised. Seek Him!
Full surely He will not deny thy claim!

Thou crucified and mocked! a mother's love
Shared Thy last pangs upon the bloody tree!
O Jesus! by that heart that ached to Thine,
Suffer my little child to come to Thee!

[DORCAS *enters and stands in the doorway, regarding Perdita, who remains motionless.*

DORCAS, *aside.*

A ray of sunshine almost fell on you,
Poor cellar-plant! but my dark shadow came
Between you and its warmth. Pine on! dwarf on!
Who knows where pines and dwarfs a fairer flower
Than ever you had claim to, swarthy Hecate!
How she sits, still and tearless! Is he dead?—
[*Approaching the bed; aloud.*
Did your Miss Helen send the medicines?

[*Perdita makes a negative sign with her head.*

I knew she would not! Had you been a lady,
He had been living now, your boy, and playing.
What care! what thought! how had the doctors come
And stood about him, studying how to save him!
Think you now, if Miss Helen's child were sick,
They 'd let him die for want of help, as this did?

PERDITA.

Her child was born to wealth, and mine to woe.
God made it so. I do not strive with Him.
And then Miss Helen is so kind and good!
I would not have her feel what I am feeling,
Not even to save myself! — Yet look at him!
Is he not fair? Her baby is not fairer?

DORCAS, *fiercely.*

How dare you set yourself above your caste?
What are you better than another slave?
So, so! your white blood gives you all this pride!

PERDITA.

I am not proud, — or only proud of him;
And he is not. Oh, be not harsh with me!
I am but what you made me, — and the Lord.

DORCAS.

I made you? — Yes, child, you are what I made you!
You never spoke a truer word than that!

[*Angrily.*

But what are you, to look with scorn on color?
For all your pride and all your white descent,
Your skin is darker now than mine. Look here!
Compare your arm with mine! Is it not darker?

PERDITA, *absently.*

Different.

DORCAS, *fiercely*

You hussy! dare you tell me so? —
Different? And well it may be different,
Our rich brown skin, from that of Europe's outcasts!
Ours has the soft, warm tint the sun lays on,
And the blood courses rich and pure beneath it:
Their creeping blood, a turbid, dingy liquor,
Gives their thin skin its own unwholesome hue.
My mother was a princess in her land;
My father was a nobleman in his.
I was not born upon this vulgar soil!

PERDITA, *imploringly.*

Dorcas! not now! not now! my heart is sore!

DORCAS, *lowering her tone.*

It had been sorer, had your baby lived!

[*Bitterly, but almost with a touch of softness.*

You 'll give him to the kind embracing earth,
That folds her arms about the friendless outcast
As tenderly as round the pampered nursling
Of gilded homes. More tenderly: no tomb

Divides him from her with its marble coldness;
The summer sun sends its warm rays to him;
The birds sing morning hymns above his bed;
The springing flowers bend tenderly about it.
Lay him to rest, and let your heart rest too!

PERDITA.

Dorcas, dear Dorcas! you speak soothing to me!
Say on! say on! oh, I have need of it!
I never had another mother. Hecate
Would never let me call her so. 'T was you
That watched me when I was as young as this one.

DORCAS.

Watched you? and tenderly? You 'll not say that?

PERDITA.

Oh, the first taste I had of life was bitter!
You know it, Dorcas. Never look of love
Or word of kindness! 'T is not to reproach you, —
I am too broken for that. And your last words,
Were they not almost kind? Say on! say on!
And only let me call you mother!

DORCAS.

No!
If she who had a right to call me mother
Slept deeply as this little one, I might
Receive another to my heart. Till then
It waits for her.

PERDITA.

You have a daughter? — where?

DORCAS.

Where? and you ask me where? I hear her call me
On every wind. At times I hear her laugh
Ring out clear, happy; and at times her shriek
Is borne to me upon the midnight blast.
Whence? If I knew it, were I here? What chains
Could hold, what dangers keep me back?

PERDITA.

Oh, none!
None even such a feeble thing as I am!
And you! — And you have lost her? Not by death?

DORCAS.

She was sent from me by a woman's whim,
A woman's spite. My daughter was too pretty;
She sang too sweetly; was too like her own.

PERDITA.

Oh, Dorcas, had I known what you have suffered,
I could have loved you, spite of all your harshness!

DORCAS.

Keep back your love! I will have none of it! —
But bless your God for this calm sleep, this safety.
He is beyond their reach.

PERDITA.

Oh, let me love you!

DORCAS.

I will not!

PERDITA.

Dorcas, oh, I must love something!
It is so empty here!
[*Putting her hand to her breast.*

DORCAS.

Love your own mother!
She 's beautiful, and I am old and hateful!

PERDITA.

She 's beautiful. Alas, I cannot love her!
She awes me back, more than you frighten me.

DORCAS.

Live, then, alone, like me! 'T is Heaven's justice, —
Or Hell's; your God's or mine! Live, then, alone!
Let your youth wither and your heart grow stone!
This was a warmer heart that now is flint!

PERDITA.

Dorcas, I pity you. Give me your pity!
Let us not hate, and both of us so lonely!

DORCAS.

You hate! You cannot hate! You have not force!

Therefore I tell you that you ought to hate me.
Her blood is in your veins who was the cause
That I am standing here alone and loveless.
Now offer me again your love, your pity!

PERDITA.

Her blood is mine! Whom can you mean? Not Hecate?

DORCAS.

And if not Hecate, then another. Ask not.

PERDITA.

And what if one akin to me have wronged you?
Why should that hinder me to pity you?

DORCAS.

I did not wait for pity, empty pity.
I have had vengeance, girl! I have had vengeance!
There is not one of all your blood and race,
From her proud sister to that nameless windfall,
That has not felt it!

PERDITA.

Dorcas, do not tell me
That you have wrought *him* harm?

DORCAS.

I will *not* tell you!

PERDITA.

You did not — did not take his life?

DORCAS.

No, no!
A stupid vengeance! Could I send the life
Back to his veins, I 'd do it for her sake
Who made me childless with a living child!

PERDITA.

Speak not so loud in presence of my dead!

DORCAS.

Even you have courage to defend your child! —
You feared that I had power to work my threat
And give him back his life?

PERDITA.

No: only God
Can do that, and He will not. But lay not
The touch of hatred on that innocent form!
Let him at least lie in his grave in peace,
Nor take a curse to sleep with him!

DORCAS.

It needs not
My touch to ban him. On your race there rests
A curse that will not pass. Above the earth
Or under it, 't will find them out.

PERDITA.

You have

Great power, they say. I would not anger you.
I will be humble to you, very humble, —
And patient, as I always was till now.

DORCAS.

Poor creeping coward! only out of fear
You speak me fair. I see your guile, you reptile!
Your baseness does but tempt the crushing foot.
I would not spare you, if I could, one pang.
But I have now no power to save or smite.
The curse was sent forth by a frenzied heart;
And where it fell, it clings and burns, like vitriol,
That the hand casts, but casts without recall. —
If I could pity, 't is the haughty Hecate,
Who does not know what cause she has to hate me,
But loathes by instinct. I can scan her heart,
And read my own in her fierce agonies.
I know what 't is to have a child not mine:
What 't is to feel the bitter love turn hate
Through mere foreboding; that hate change to love
Again, to passionate, wild love, when comes
The black hour of fulfilment. This will come
To Hecate and to you. Then look to feel
For once the clasping of a mother's arms,
For once to read a mother's grief and love
Upon the face of her who gave you birth!

PERDITA.

Oh, let it come that once, whatever follow!

DORCAS.

It will, be sure ! The hour of separation
Will give you, when it takes from you, a mother ! —
The sun is setting. See the lengthened shadows !
How bright it is without ! how dingy here !
There 's hardly light enough to see your child.
Heed that the demons take him not away
And leave a vampire in his place ! Such things
Do happen, you know. I 'll go and beg two candles
Up at the house, to light your watch. Thus much
I 'll do for you, though you are Hecate's child.
With the first daylight we will make for him
A little grave and lay a stone on it,
Where you may sit at night and talk to him,
While yet you can. Heed me, — a change is near !
The hour of parting comes, — the hour of parting
From all you love, the living and the dead !
Hecate must know what I have known, and you
Have to live out again my daughter's sorrows.
An exile she ; an exile you must be !

PERDITA.

The living and the dead ! Lost she her dead ?
I must go forth and leave his grave untended ?

DORCAS.

You must. 'T is writ. And by this sign I know
My daughter's child sleeps in a lonely grave.

[*Going, she looks back.*

Outside your threshold, in a sheltered place,

Lay privately some valued thing. The demon,
Lurking to catch the spirit of your child,
Will take your gift in ransom. See to it!

[*Goes.*

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

EVENING.

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

EVENING.

SCENE. — *The glade in the wood. Moonlight. Groups of slaves, as in the First Scene of Morning. In the foreground, towards the left,* SORDEL *leans against a tree. In the centre of the foreground a group of persons, among whom are* MELAS, FLORA, ROXANA, PETER, CHLOE, DAFFY, *and others.*

MELAS.

Sordel 's himself to-night. With this clear moonlight,
This gentle air to fan us, and his music,
What is there left to wish for?

[*To Peter.*

Uncle Peter,
Tell us, tell truly now, were Oscar's rhymes
Much sweeter to the ear and to the heart
Than our Sordel's?

PYRRHUS.

Oscar, the famous singer?

MELAS.

That died last year.

PETER.

That died last year indeed!
He died full twenty years ago.

PYRRHUS.

Not so.

MELAS, *to Pyrrhus.*

Don't contradict him. He is old.

PETER.

Old? Oscar?
He was already old when I was young.

PYRRHUS.

He never came to this plantation?

PETER.

Never.
Folks came from far and near to him, but he
Never stirred foot except to seek the wood
Where he wove baskets and his songs together.
They say, that, of all trees, he loved the pine.

PYRRHUS.

Sang he so well?

PETER.

Boy, I will tell you this:
What music is, what song is, none of you
Born in these days can ever know nor will.

We have had singers; but their race is out.
Sordel does well. For those who have not heard
What I have heard, — yes, and for those who have,
He brings a pleasant hour. But, in my youth!
Nor do I now mean Oscar.

PYRRHUS.

We may have
As good as he some day.

PETER.

Speak soberly.
You know not what you talk of. Never ear
Nor heart will know such strains again. They say
His mother was a wonder-working woman,
Who, by strange arts and heathenish devices,
Brought with her from the other side the world,
Compelled the spirits of the air to teach him
Tones never heard before from mortal lips.
Men listened at the peril of their souls,
But still they listened.

MELAS.

What was Oscar like?

PETER.

I can remember him still straight and tall.
His cheek was thin; his brow was seamed; his eye
Bright with a gleam that was not earth's, — nor heaven's.

MELAS.

The secret of his skill is lost?

PETER.

Oh, boy,
You would not search for it? Know you the price
He paid for it? The cruel Unseen Powers
Took back their gifts, and took his spirit with them.
Full twenty weary years the body lingered —
Trying to die — after the soul had left it.

DAFFY, *to Chloe.*

Is all this true?

CHLOE.

People believed so once.

PETER.

But we had other singers in our time,
Not aided by black arts, whose every song
Was worth a year full of the idle piping
That men delight in now. And farther back
There were still greater. In my father's day,
For instance ——

MELAS.

Uncle Peter, we will grant you
That former days were richer days than ours
In rhyme and music.

PYRRHUS.

There was little work,
They tell us, in those times; and ease is songful.

MELAS.

And then they had a language of their own,
Those older singers, and strains brought from far:
The language and the strains their mothers taught them.
For those who listened and for those who sang,
Voices of home and happy childhood mingled
With the sweet melody. This made it sacred.
And therefore has their memory passed to us
Hallowed and dear. Those precious songs are lost:
Or, if of some the words remain, the sense
Is hid; there 's no one to interpret it.

PYRRHUS.

Perhaps we shall be boasting to our children
Of what our music was!

PETER.

'T is like you may.
That does n't make it better now.

FLORA.

Oh, Pyrrhus,
Don't anger the old man! And all agree
These times are not like those.

MELAS.

Sordel himself
Owns he has not the force of those old rhymers.

PYRRHUS.

Yet we have those who suit us and our time.

MELAS.

Who put our thoughts in words for us, — who tell us
What we have felt, but knew not how to speak.

PYRRHUS.

Just so it is. When I have heard Sordel,
Or sometimes Daniel, I have felt my thought
Set in his verse. It moved so easily,
I wondered how I missed the words he found.

FLORA.

We have our sacred songs, which, if they speak not
Of a lost home, tell of a home to find.
Let us not envy other times or people.

[JUBAL *enters from the left, in a cloak. He approaches, unnoticed, the group in the foreground, and listens to their conversation with a pleased and paternal expression.*

CHLOE.

Sordel must sing again. These old-world stories
Are not so cheering as his songs.

FLORA.

Ask, Melas.

MELAS, *approaching Sordel.*

So still, Sordel? You that make others glad
Seem not to share the cordial of your music.
My heart 's still beating time to your last song.

[*Sordel does not answer.*

MELAS, *returning to Flora.*

I dare not urge. He 's tired, or else unhappy.

PYRRHUS.

He must be happy as a mortal can be!

CHLOE.

He could be happier; for he could be rich.
He only has his song.

MELAS.

Is song not riches?

JUBAL *lays his hand on the shoulder of Melas and nods to him, smiling pleasantly. He then throws off his cloak and discovers a stringed instrument, of a quaint form, ornamented with rude carvings. As he tunes his instrument, he addresses Melas in a sort of recitative.*

Who should answer, if not I?
I read your longing in your eye.
Boy, this riches they who covet,
To win it, only need to love it:
But boldly, strongly; for our art
Smiles never on the faint of heart.

[*He preludes and then sings, accompanying himself on his instrument.*

Who is richer than the singer?
Though he have not lands nor gold,
Yet the wealth his fancies hold
Is more than miser ever told.
Who is richer than the singer?

Is it, then, the foolish clinger
To the treasures of the ground,
With long toil and stooping found,
And which, gathered, are to keep
At cost of joy and cost of sleep?
Ask their owner which most hard,
To earn his thousands or to guard?

[*Interlude.*

Ah, the singer's treasures rare
Come without his thought or care!
It is ordered, everything
Shall to him a tribute bring.
And he sits a tranquil king,
With his realm about him spread,
While the gentle and the dread,
The uncomely and the fair,
The abounding and the bare,
With a smile or with a frown,
Duly lay their offering down.
Joyful sunshine, mournful shade,
False abyss and open glade,
Wasting flood and fertile shower,
Blasted trunk and budding flower,
Glaring sand-plain, forest dim,
Gentle hill-slope, rock-cliff grim,
All must minister to him.
Breezes on the bending grass
Leave a token as they pass;
Floating islands of the sky
Waft a gift as they sail by;

Silver brooklets, chiming sweet,
Lay their music at his feet;
Watchers by the brooded nest
Give the gladness of their breast;
Shedding rose and fading leaf
Make an offering of their grief:
No shape or life in earth or space
But knows him there and does him grace.

[*Interlude.*

Has the singer greater pain
To keep his fortune than to gain?
How should he from riches part
Who has his treasury in his heart?

[*All remain silent for a moment, then*

MELAS.

He is not poor, nor are they poor who hear him!

FLORA.

Blessed is song! What were the world without it?

JUBAL, *sings.*

Who is rich, if not the singer?
Is he not the joyful bringer
Of the best things mortals know?
How should he such gifts bestow,
If Heaven had not loved him best
And made him richer than the rest?

[*Interlude.*

What would you have known of Beauty,

If the singer had not brought
Down from heaven that pearly thought?
How learned you the name of Duty?
Did that diamond pure and fine
Not lie buried in its mine,
Until his divining dream
Opened the secret of its gleam?
Your existence, rudely wrought
Of coarse iron, being fraught
With the light those jewels shed,
Seemed from that hour with silver spread.

[*Interlude.*

Lands and gold
Make hard and cold.
But the singer's wealth makes tender.
He can be a liberal spender,
Nor yet see his storehouse bare.
When the poor have had their share,
Still he has, and has to spare.
Shut out none
With walls of stone!
All may rob him at their pleasure;
For when all enjoy his treasure,
Still it is not less his own.

[*Jubal throws his cloak over his shoulders and is about to go. The people, who stand for a moment, still wrapt in his song after it has ceased, suddenly wake, rush forward, surround and detain him.*

JUBAL.

Let me go, children! You have had of me

All I am worth. The music, not the case,
Is your affair. When you have had the grain,
Let the wind sweep the husk off. My last song
I leave with you.

[SORDEL *comes forward, takes the old man's hand reverently, presses it to his heart, then to his lips, and returns to his place by the tree.*

VOICES.

But who? But whence? What name?
Oh, when we tell the story of this day,
What is that name that we would least forget?

JUBAL.

And do you know me not without my name?
I am that Jubal whom you all have heard of, —
Vowed, with the Christian water that washed off
The Cain and fallen man in me, to service
Of instruments of wind and string. These pipes

[*He takes a set of rude pipes from his bosom.*

Were my first organ. While all yet lay void
And formless in my soul, I fashioned them,
Not knowing what I did. They touched my lips, —
I felt the Spirit move upon my being,
Composing to their place the jarring parts.
And now it breathed through me and there was light!
That radiant day! its joy can thrill me yet!
After, came to me new and new creations,
Each more complete; and last of all was born
This human gift of melody in speech,
Which when I won, the song that only breathed

Seemed like the mute prayer of the dumber creatures
For freer voice, which I put up no more.
Then did the harp, to which I was baptized
Not less than to the pipes, invite my hand,
And offer its sweet tinklings to attend
As wingèd air-sprites on my mounting words.

[*He raises the pipes to his lips, and then replaces them in his bosom.*

Yet do I keep my earliest consoler
Nearer my heart than any newer joy.

VOICES.

Jubal!

MELAS.

We should have known you!

JUBAL.

Said I not?

MELAS.

And yet you look much younger than you can be.

JUBAL.

My son, I am yet younger than appears.
I never learned to count my age by years.
While swift thoughts visit me, fresh fancies gladden, —
While hope can charm me still, and memory sadden, —
While still my heart to the old friends is true,
And yet gives hearty welcome to the new, —
While praise and shame my spirit load or lighten, —
While every change has power to shade or brighten, —
May I not claim, without offence to truth,
Though seventy years oppose, I hold my youth?

FLORA, *laughing.*

He is as young as any one of us.
How bright his eye is! His foot pats the ground,
Timing his words now, as before his music.

MELAS, *to Jubal.*

Why sing you, then, for the last time to-day?

JUBAL.

If from this day I cease to pour my song,
It is not that I feel the fountain dried.
But I would lay the harp down ere my hand
Forget its cunning. I would have the echo
Of my last song die sweetly on the ear,
And die regretted.

MELAS.

And so it would, whenever!

ROXANA.

I should have known you, Jubal. I remember,
On the great wedding-day, that you came down
To our plantation with your master then,
Ours now.

JUBAL.

He was not even then my master.
And I might say I never had a master.
I was your master's mother's. When she went,
She left me unto hands as weak as hers;
And they, with loving thanks for loving service,
Gave me the freedom I had never missed.
Now I belong only to God and music.

VOICES.

Come back, then! oh, come back! Your home is here!

JUBAL.

And would you have me turn her gift against her?
And who shall tend for me that ailing boy,
When I am no more near him? Who shall make
The long nights short for him by reading, tireless
Through double love of him and of the page?
This place is dear; I love the very ground;
For it was here that I was called and chosen.
But when Miss Cora bade me hence with her,
How could I let her go where all was strange,
And I to stay, not knowing if she missed me?
Besides, I thought new climates and new scenes
Might give me higher thoughts and richer fancies.
And then, she knew one music from another.
So I consented, and my choice was blest.
For, after that, I made this happy harp, —
The third and best, — I played it at her wedding,
And at your master's. Those were its great days.
But no rejoicing in our neighborhood
For twenty years it has not shared and heightened.
It never sounded yet for your Miss Helen;
But when I heard her son, the heir, should come
To the old place for the first time to-day,
I knew its voice and mine must aid the welcome.
And from this day I do devote to silence
Strings that have never spoken but for joy:
I will not further tempt their luck, nor mine.

VOICES.

But stay! but stay!

FLORA.

We have not thanked you yet.

JUBAL.

I gave but what was given me for you.
I should have wronged you, had I kept it from you.

MELAS, *detaining him.*

Does he for whom the earth and air have gifts
Wrong, if he hold them for his lonely use?

JUBAL.

If the flowers wither in the selfish hand,
If the song die within the stifling heart,
It shall be answered for, young man! And therefore
Have these flowers thorns for those who share them not,
This song afflicts the breast where it is pent.
For God is oftener gracious in the pain
We pray to Him may pass than in the ease
We note not to give thank for.

FLORA.

He is gone!

JUBAL, *going, turns and waves his hand to Melas.*

Who struggles with dumb music in his breast,
Give it but way and let his soul have rest!

PYRRHUS.

Jubal! a pleasant name!

MANY, *to Roxana.*

Oh, tell us of him!

ROXANA.

I saw him only once, before to-day,
As I have told you: at my mistress' wedding.

VOICES.

But why, but why came he not back to us?

ROXANA.

Our master's mother left him to her sister.

FLORA.

Our mistress would have valued him as much.

ROXANA.

She heard him but that once, and had Theresa.

FLORA.

We have Sordel.

PYRRHUS.

What can we ask for more?

PETER.

I fear, I fear, this Jubal is too jovial!
I have known many singers in my day:
They 're sad and silent when they do not sing.

FLORA.

Sordel is so: that shows him the right sort.

MELAS.

Song is their language, and they have no other.

SORDEL *comes forward, preludes and sings.*

Would you the singer's feeling trace?
Then take not for the true
The mood that 's written on his face,
But that he wakes in you.

Not on his brow the sunshine lies,
Not there the shadow rests;
His joys shine out from other eyes,
His griefs swell other breasts.

Nor trust his verse; that, too, beguiles;
But the heart's echo hear:
For sorrow often speaks in smiles,
And gladness through a tear.

If, when his song pours light and free,
Your hearts uncheered remain,
'T is that the careless melody
Springs from a heart in pain.

Or do the faintly murmured words
Breathe of delight and rest,
Though plaintive as the song of birds
Above the guarded nest?

'T is that the spirit's truth destroys
The fond dissembler's art:
His strain reveals the tender joys
That nestle in his heart.

PYRRHUS, *to Peter.*

How does that please you, Father Peter?

PETER, *with candor.*

Well.
I don't refuse to listen to your songs
Because I have heard better. I 'm not proud.

[*Enter* MILO, *chanting in a loud, sonorous voice. As he proceeds, the rest become silent, one after another, until the attention of all is turned upon him. He advances towards the foreground.*

MILO.

Great house, great barn, great coach, great trees, great lands,
All his! and then, all his these heaps of hands!
And he to leave all this and go away?
No, don't believe it! no, he means to stay!

VOICES.

What is he talking of? Who go? All these
Are our own master's: house, barn, land, and trees.
What can it mean? He leave and go away?
It is impossible!

MILO.

Why, so I say.

Who knows if in the world he comes to next
He 'll have first choice? How would his soul be vexed,
If, coming to the other side, it found
It was to harrow, not to have the ground!

VOICES.

What can it be? It 's terrible, this doubt!

OTHER VOICES.

Come to it, then! Whose soul? Whose soul? Speak out!

MILO.

Such things have happened, so they say, and worse.
A heavy tombstone is a heavy purse.
This lifetime's gold weighs down the dead man so,
His spirit cannot stretch its wings to go
To the best world, but, dragged and pulled, must fall
Right through the earth, to the worst place of all!

FLORA.

What are we going to hear? My heart stands still!

ROXANA.

Something has happened! Is it good or ill?

MILO.

The shapes of all the pleasures he has known
Keep by his side, although no more his own;
Their ghosts seek his, and beckoning, mocking, taunt
Him who once haunted them, whom now they haunt.

Such things I 've heard for true, — and were they not,
What, then, has heaven that he has not got?
Had he but all to gain, as you and I! —
No, no! be sure he does not mean to die!

VOICES.

Die?

BOAZ, *enters.*

Will he die? I heard that he was ill
Only this moment, and came here to tell you.

VOICES.

Who ill? The master ill? And like to die?

PYRRHUS.

He like to die? So bright and well this morning!
How did it happen?

BOAZ.

'T was a sudden seizure.
The doctor says there 's hope, and only hope.

VOICES.

What will become of us? So good a master!

ANOTHER VOICE.

But, if he dies, Miss Helen is our mistress.

[PHILIP *enters, and joins the group in the foreground.*

PYRRHUS.

Our mistress. But her husband is our master.
Is he good, think you?

MELAS.

Why, he must be good;
Or else she had n't had him.

PYRRHUS, *to Philip.*

But you know him.
You 've seen him at his place. He 's a good master?

PHILIP.

Ah, — a good master? Yes. But not like ours.
He has a rather short way with his people:
A little high or so.

PYRRHUS.

That 's what I thought.
I 've seen him often here as boy and man.
He always had a brisk, short way with us.
But when he 'd got Miss Helen's promise safe,
He came out stronger.

PHILIP.

Well, that 's natural,
Being sure, you know. But after all, he 's good.
He holds no close grip on his purse, — that 's one thing.

MELAS.

No, he 's free-handed. I 've had proof of that.

PYRRHUS.

We 'll not be stinted, then?

CHLOE.

No, we 'll have plenty,—
Meat, clothes, and holidays. The master willing,
Miss Helen won't say, No.

PYRRHUS.

If he 's free-handed,
That 's all I ask.

PETER.

You 're young and rash, my boy!
Not the free spenders are the best for us;
The close ones may be safest in the end.
I 've seen the world. I 'm not much over sixty;
I 've had four changes.

PYRRHUS.

Each time for the better.

PETER.

Well, that 's true, too: each time except the first.
I 've had my troubles. But I hope they 're over.
If this storm blows by, as I think it will,
I hope I 'll end my days in peace. The master
Is young yet,—much too young to die.

MELAS.

Miss Helen
Stays with him all the time?

PHILIP.

Miss Helen and Hecate.
The mistress falls from one faint to another.

ROXANA.

The mistress! I must go to her at once!
But whose will we be who were hers at first?
Shall we be hers, or shall we be Miss Helen's?

PETER.

We shall be hers. Stick you by those you 're born with;
Don't look to strangers. That 's the advice I give you.
When changes once begin, they don't end soon.

ROXANA.

Miss Helen's husband is a stranger, then?

PETER.

To you he is. You were not born on 's place.
Keep to your own. Don't court the new. Stand fast.
Say you 're the mistress's, whatever happens.

BOAZ.

That will be my card. So, let come what will,
I shall fall easy. Or they won't object,
Or, if they do, I shall have shown attachment
To my old mistress. They like that in us.
I shall not fare the worse. Do you as I do.
But now I must be wanted at the house.
They cannot do without me. And you, Philip?

PHILIP.

I 've been upon a confidential errand,
And just came back this way. I 'm going now.

BOAZ.

And I must go.

ROXANA, *reluctantly.*

And I, to my poor mistress.

[*Boaz, Philip, and Roxana go.*

MELAS.

What do we gossip here, and our poor master
Lies in the struggle between death and life?
If death prevail, there wait the evil powers
On the one side, the good ones on the other,
Ready to take the spirit as it flits.
Who is there that will think to chase the bad,
And call the good ones down in greater number,
By pious word or song? Who is there near him
That will take thought of this? Then we must do it.
Woe, woe to him, if the black bands prove strongest!
Shall his soul pass unhelped by hymn or prayer?

VOICES.

Oh, no! oh, no! and he so good a master!
Strike up a hymn! Strike up a death-bed hymn!

[*Voices in various quarters give the pitch for different tunes. In different parts of the field a beginning is made of some favorite hymn, but the voice dies away after a few notes. A dead silence follows, suddenly broken by a clear, sweet voice.*

VOICE.

From earthly toil and sorrow
The weary pass away,
To find their last to-morrow,
Their endless resting-day.

Then let there be no grieving,
Though they go forth alone;
Think they are only leaving
A strange land for their own.

OTHER VOICES, *reply.*

We grieve not for those going,
Their home and ours to find;
For us our tears are flowing,
For us who stay behind.

Not those who 're havened yonder,
Where rest and plenty bless;
But we mourn those who wander
Still in the wilderness.

MELAS.

What hymn is this? A hymn for us the poor!
It suits not the condition of our master.
Is he a wanderer in the wilderness?
Is he tired out with living? Will he find
More rest and ease on the other side than here?

PYRRHUS.

Hardly. Look here! Have none of you some hymns
You 've heard at church? hymns proper for our masters?

VOICE.

A death-bed hymn? I can remember one.

OLD MAN.

But all they say themselves to one another
May not be fit for us to say of them.
Most of the death-bed hymns I 've heard at church
Were full of heavy threatenings.

NELAS.

Listen! listen!

VOICE. *sings.*

Where is the tree? To-day it stood
The fairest glory of the wood,
So high its top, so wide its root. —
The Lord came by and looked for fruit!

O tree, thy haughty head is sunk!
No longer may thy hollow trunk
Stretch its false branches to the sky:
Where thou hast fallen thou must lie!

The early and the latter rain
Shall strike thy crisping leaves in vain,
Nor sun nor wind shall do thee good:

It is too late to grow new wood.
Thou hadst thy springtide and thy prime:
They passed, and there is no more time!

O soul! thou heard'st the Master call,
And thought'st it soon to give up all:
There were yet time to seek His ways
After a length of prosperous days.

The hopes of this world's children pass
Like wayside herb or housetop grass,
Wine spilled before it reach the cup,
Corn blasted ere it be grown up.

Now, sinner, must thy fleeting day
Count with things waste and thrown away.
Its course is run. Beneath the sod
There is no time to work for God:
No time for work, lost soul! and yet
Eternity for vain regret!

AN OLD MAN.

Oh, may he but find mercy! — For the rich
Christ has more threats than promises. For us,
Only for us, the word is full of mercy!

[*Sobs and groans.*

A VOICE, *bursts forth.*

O lovely Christ! sweet Christ! the poor man's brother!
How shall we show our gratitude to Thee?

ANOTHER VOICE, *answers.*

The Master saith: "By loving one another
Shall you make known the love you have for me."

CHORUS OF VOICES.

Then let us love and let us help our neighbor,
Since this is all the pay that Christ will ask;
And we will think it is for Him we labor,
When our tired hands make out a brother's task.

MELAS.

You talk about yourselves and your religion,
And have no thought of your poor dying master!
Shall his soul pass unhelped by sacred song?

[*While Melas is speaking,* EZEKIEL *enters. He stands a little apart, and regards the people with a grave and sympathizing expression.*

PYRRHUS.

Can our songs aid him?

[*Ezekiel comes forward. The people are all silenced by his appearance. They draw back a little, and stand in an attitude of respectful attention.*

EZEKIEL.

We are one in Christ,
And nearer one than you may think, on earth.
This soul, that shivers on the misty confines
Of the two worlds, has had its part of care,
Its part of weariness, its part of pain;
And if it lay its burden loathly down,

Hugging that care, that weariness, that pain,
Has it not greater need of prayer than those
Whom the deceitful ties of worldly wealth
Retain not, making heaven's bliss less dear?
[*Pause.*
Ere we uplift our souls to the All-Pure,
Search we ourselves, that no unholy feeling
Make void the prayer our lips address to Him.
We kneel for one who goes to judgment hence.
If any here, of those who call him master,
Reproach him in their hearts for griefs endured
Or joys withheld, let them forgive him now.
Heavy upon the spirit of the dying
Hangs the dependant's accusation! Let not
Him miss through you his part of Paradise.
Father, forgive him, as we have forgiven!

THERESA, *who has entered while Ezekiel is speaking, and stands apart, raises her right hand to heaven, praying inwardly.*

Judge, as he measured, mete Thou unto him!

OLD MAN, *raising his hands towards heaven.*

Father, forgive us, as we have forgiven!

VOICES.

Amen! Amen! What have we to forgive?

OTHER VOICES.

Amen! Amen! Who could reproach him now?

EZEKIEL.

Pray with me, brothers! —
Thou that art the Father
Of rich and poor, of bond and free, look down
Upon this spot, where meet Thy humblest children
To ask Thy mercy for a dying man!
This man is not our equal. Before Thee
Alone could we appear to plead for him.
But Thou, All-Great, dost with impartial eyes
Look on his wealth as on our misery.
O Father, if the load of worldly cares
Press down his soul that would spring up to Thee,
Aid Thou its struggles, lend it of Thy strength,
And let Thy heaven, opening before it,
Court it with glimpses of transcendent joy!
If the affections of this mortal state
Hold with soft ties, but strong, let Thy compassion
Gently unloose from earth the clinging tendrils,
To bind them to the bowers of Paradise!
O God and Judge! if unrepented sin
Lurk in the dim recesses of his heart,
Hidden ally of the malignant demon,
Let Thy kind chastisement awake the sleeping!
Stir Thou his conscience to its lowest depths,
And let the anguish of the final hour,
Summing the tortures of a long repentance,
Be counted unto him for expiation!
So may his spirit, purified by pain,
Ask and receive its part in Thy atonement!

VOICES.

Amen! Amen!

EZEKIEL.

Lord, let Thy blessing rest
Upon these sheep soon left without a shepherd!
Be Thou their guard and guide! Hast Thou not said,
"When all forsake, the Lord will take thee up"?
Grant, Father, in Thy mercy, that they may
Still look upon the faces of their own,
Still tend the land that saw their children born!
But if Thou have decreed it otherwise,
O Father, if the places that have known them
Shall know them now no more forever, grant them
To keep their faith companion of their exile, —
To feel, O present Help in time of need,
They cannot wander where Thou wilt not follow! —

Brothers, farewell! Watch through the night with prayer!
Though God deny his life to your petitions,
Yet shall your hearts be purified and chastened,
And fitter to accept what He ordains.

[*Ezekiel goes. The people remain with their heads bowed as in silent prayer. The scene closes.*

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

NIGHT.

TRAGEDY OF ERRORS.

NIGHT.

SCENE. — *A large, dimly lighted room. On the right a bed, of which the curtains are drawn away on the side next the spectators.* STANLEY *lies on it.* HECATE *stands near it. Storm without. The wind, at intervals, bursts in at the open window and sweeps through the room, then dies away into stillness.*

HECATE.

The hour is come! These signs are known to me.

STANLEY, *in a faint voice.*

Where is my daughter?

HECATE.

She was summoned hence.

The mistress ——

STANLEY.

Call her back!

HECATE.

She went unwilling.

She will not long delay. —

[*Aside.*

The time is short!

STANLEY, *rousing himself.*

Is it thou, Hecate? Do thy faithful hands
Still tend my pillow? Thou shalt be rewarded.
More than a servant's duty thou hast rendered:
Thou shalt do service to no other master.
Thou and thy child are by my will made free.

HECATE.

Thy will? And has thy will the power of Fate
To bind and loose? Frail man! know that our child
A stronger will than thine has freed already.

STANLEY.

What means this tone? Thy daughter is not dead?

HECATE.

No: radiant with life, with hope, with beauty!
God listened to my prayer and granted her
My share of happiness. Thou canst not now
Withdraw from her her birthright as thy daughter,
Thy eldest born.

STANLEY.

Hecate, I know thee not
In this strange mood.

HECATE.

Say rather, now thou know'st me.

For the first time — the first for twenty years —
We meet alone together face to face.
Know'st thou who stands beside thee here? Thy slave, —
The plaything of a former time, — the drudge,
The patient nurse of this? Another office
I fill beside thy deathbed: Heaven's justice
Makes itself heard through me.

STANLEY.

Hecate, what say'st thou?
Is it my troubled brain that lends thy voice
These ominous tones, — thy face this ghastly sternness?
Do sight and hearing fail me?

HECATE.

Dying man!
They say that in the fatal hour the soul
Takes retrospect of her past road; that objects
Long dim in distance start forth suddenly
In vividness beyond their natural hues:
Forms worn and bent retake the bloom of youth;
Kind smiles look forth from long-estrangèd eyes;
Faces flit by that the green earth-sod covers;
Tones whose last echoes died long years ago
Float backward on the ethery waves to thrill
The torpid ear with keener consciousness.
Is it thus?

STANLEY.

Yes. Faces come back, and voices.
But stay near me in silence. I am weak.

Perplex me not with talking. I can listen,
Reply, no longer.

HECATE.

Thou wilt listen! Seest thou
Among those forms a slight young girl?

STANLEY.

Cease, cease
This idling! These pale flitting figures
Molest me, even unsummoned by thy words.
I would compose myself for death. My life
Has not been wholly without stain of earth,
But no dishonor marks it. I have filled
My place as man, as citizen, as neighbor.
I have already made my peace with God.
I am at peace with man. I have wronged no one.

HECATE.

Among those flitting figures mark'st thou one
Slight, sorrow-touched, with soft, entreating eyes
That seem to seek in every human face
Something once known, but long pursued in vain?
Just sixteen years have formed her what she is:
Ten years of summer, six of polar frost.
The glow of tropic years reveals its trace
In the quick mantling, quick receding blood;
The wintry years have stamped their iron reign
On her calm brow, her firm, untrembling lip.
She stands amid a group composed of all
Earth holds most abject; yet she feels no shame.

Near her are men cold, stern, or rude, whose nod
Can sign her fate; yet neither hope nor fear
Stirs in her heart. Her eyes have made their quest:
What they sought was not, and their clouded gaze
Sank to the earth. She marks not when the crowd
Dissolves around her; heeds not that the tumult
Gives place to silence. Suddenly a voice
Close by her side! It only asked her name.
But, at those tones, low, tender, musical,
Her sleeping heart awoke. She raised her eyes,
And met those answering eyes. Oh, what a heaven
Of light and joy was opened in that glance!
The sought was found: that look of human love!
That look last read upon a mother's face,
But blent with grief, but dimmed by helplessness,
Shone on her once again; now gay with smiles
And confident in power. That kindly look
Was bent on her by him whom in that hour
Fortune had made her master. In that name
No terrors more. To follow, toil for him, —
To render back by years of faithful service
The debt that moment of delight imposed, —
This thought filled all her soul. With springing step
She followed him, nor asked nor heeded whither;
Trusting in him as in her mother, — in God.

STANLEY.

Why seek to call forth from the hazy past
These idle visions? It is as to strive
To build again the fairy monuments

Formed by the shifting summer clouds. To thee
These recollections have, perhaps, a value:
To me what are they but the irksome record
Of vanities forgotten or despised?

HECATE.

Bethink thee where thou art! Earth's vain distinctions
Exist for thee no longer. Thou art standing,
A feeble, naked soul, upon the brink
Of the unknown. Thou art no more the master
Of wide-spread lands, of other human souls.
We are here now as equals, as two beings
Whose fates are interlocked eternally.
Thou, looking backward through the frigid course
Of lagging years to thy exuberant youth,
View'st its desires and acts as fleeting follies.
Yet not the less in those rich hours of spring
Were the first ardors of thy opening heart
Poured forth upon the friendless orphaned girl;
Yet not the less was an eternal bond
Then welded between thy proud soul and hers.
Thou canst not cancel, even by thy scorn,
Not even by thy blank forgetfulness,
Those marriage-ties unowned by human laws,
But set down in irrevocable record. —
Yes, thou must hear! — From our united lives,
Howe'er disjoined, howe'er repellent now,
Has sprung a life destined to be the source
Of a long line that through all future time
Shall bear the traces of our blended natures;

And from that world where shall be our next meeting,
The angels of the master and the slave
Shall watch together o'er its shifting fortunes.
Whate'er the path, through sunshine or in shade,
Those beings born of ours are called to tread,
Our parent hearts will track their wandering steps.
Once more those hearts must thrill in harmony.
Each throb of pain that heaves those tender bosoms
Through which our blended life-tide flows shall send
To ours a sharper pang. To the glad beat
Of happy hearts ours shall exulting answer.
Together shall we stretch our viewless hands
To hold the waverer on the brink of crime
Back from its gulf; we shall together suffer
The double anguish of remorse that sees
In the new guilt the old revived. But, oh!
May we not also in the generous thought,
The noble deed, reclaim the parents' share?
May we not, glorying in our children's virtue,
Find our own lives redeemed? Oh, may we not
Turn on each other then relenting looks,
And, reconciled at last, together seek,
Even in our crippled, uncompleted lives,
The latent germ of the full-opened flower?

STANLEY.

My ear is weary! Rave no more!

HECATE.

I rave,

Because I dare to figure for the offspring
Of thy own richest years, most real affections,
A fate not cursed, attributes not ignoble?
If, deeming thus, I rave, thou rav'st with me!
Blooms not that fair existence sprung from ours
With all thy life not less than mine had brightest?
All that there was of happy in my fate,
All that there was of generous in thy heart,
Passed into hers, leaving us destitute,
But crowning her with wealth in overplus.
Is she not dowered with such munificent gifts
As in old time have won the name of god-born
For those whose parentage no father claimed?
What on thy dreary, colorless existence
Gleamed, the sole sunbeam? On thy stagnant life
What came to thee as the fresh breeze of heaven,
Lifting the clogging vapors from thy path?
When, in thy dull and objectless career,
'Mid vulgar cares, and joys more vulgar yet,
When didst thou know one hour of heartfelt bliss
That was not by thy daughter's hand prepared?
Knew'st thou in all these years one pure emotion,
One generous thought, that was not waked by her?
What solace has thy death-hour, what regret,
That does not speak of her? what earthward hope
That does not wreathe itself round Helen's name?

STANLEY.

Helen! Ah, in that name thou hast a spell
That never fails thee! All is overlooked:

Thy frequent strangeness, thy proud looks, bold words,
When I recall what thou hast been to her!

HECATE.

What have I been to her? The patient nurse
That put away her baby from her bosom
And dutifully took the mistress' child?
Have I not often told thee in these veins
There does not flow one drop of servile blood?
Thou wouldst think otherwise. Thou wast content
To count upon a slave's fidelity.
Fidelity! — and I was faithful where
I owed allegiance: true to God and Nature.
Outlawed I stood; unbound by human compacts;
The woman lived in me, the mother, sole!
How, then! and thou couldst think that radiant being
The fruit of bonds by priests and lawyers framed
To join thy lands to Emma Fortescue's?
And thou couldst think that life o'erflowed with sunshine,
Exuberant with love, with joy, with hope,
The offspring of your cold, reluctant union
With that affectionless, idealess thing!

STANLEY.

God! whither tends this?

HECATE.

Listen! When that hour,
That happy mothers wait with dread and hope
Alternating and mingling, fell on me,

I lay crushed under a despair so heavy
That the debasements of those months of shame
And all the closing tortures were as nothing.
The poorest wretch, yet owning her own soul,
That on her squalid couch brings forth to-day
A new existence, however fallen, guilt-soiled,
Knows in that hour foreboding of return;
And gentle thoughts of pious expiation
Lull her regrets, as to her sheltering bosom
She holds the new-born, hers, her own! But I!
The shame, the tortures, had for me no fruit
But deeper shame, but keener agonies:
I knew my doom; the sentence had gone forth. —
In the proud mansion near, another child
Waited to see the light. Around the couch
Where its pale mother was to meet her hour,
Already was prepared what wealth could buy
Or love invent, to mitigate its pangs.
The looked-for babe, the heir of lands and gold,
Had yet no claim on Nature's richest treasures:
The feeble source from which its life had sprung
Could never hope to nourish its expansion.
A richer breast must yield the high-born foundling
The food its mother's poverty denied.
I was marked out, unwilling benefactress,
To foster the strange claimant in my arms,
To yield my bosom to the vampire lips
That through my veins should suck my infant's life.
I knew it all: yet a few weeks and then

My child was orphaned. Sudden from despair
I rose to more than hope, — to strength, to daring;
I felt in me a power to master Fate.
I battled fiercely, and my strong will conquered.
My soul had inwardly received assurance
Of the won victory, when towards my door
Came hurrying feet. The ancient blear-eyed crone
That sat by me rose quickly from her place;
But, ere she reached the door, a young girl entered: —
"Come to the mistress!" — In her frighted look
I read it all: the fated hour was come.
I rose. I had no purpose in my heart.
I only knew my place was by that bed, —
That thither my child's future called me. Blindly
I followed the mysterious impulsion.
Within the house confusion reigned; the servants
Ran wildly round, not knowing what they did.
The master was from home. The great event
Had come untimely, and the pampered lady
Found in her hour of need no other aid
But the old purblind crone's that tended me:
But hers — and mine. I in my arms received
My destined charge. — Upon the selfsame breast
The sisters lay. Upon the head of one
Propitious stars shot down their influence.
The other — was before her birth predestined
To misery and shame. Thou hast divined.
God gave the occasion, and I welcomed it.
The inward prophecy had found fulfilment.

When the new mother, rallying from her faintness,
Asked for her child, before her ravished eyes
I held my rose-tinged, fairly-rounded babe,
While her poor bantling sent forth feeble wails
Upon the wretched pallet of the slave.

STANLEY.

Thou torturing fiend! Is it in mockery
Of my death-agonies thou comest hither
To aid their sharpness with thy lying words?

HECATE.

Thy heart, thy conscience tell thee I speak truth.

STANLEY.

It cannot be! Thou couldst not dare!

HECATE.

Not dare?
What fear should check me? The respectful awe,
Perchance, that bows the slave's soul to his master's,
And makes him tremble even at his own thoughts,
If they suggest rebellion? The slave-brand
I wear not on my soul! I will and dare!

STANLEY.

No! it is one of your mad brain's delusions!

HECATE.

Nor falsehood nor yet dream: reality!

Thou know'st it such! Thy quivering betrays thee!
The daughter thou hadst left to infamy
Is crowned with wealth and honor. She whose fate
Would have been dearer to thee than thy soul's
Creeps through her abject, hopeless life.

STANLEY.

Thou demon!
Why hast thou kept this for my dying hour?

HECATE.

That thou might'st be the partner of my secret
On the other side the grave; but that on this
Thou shouldst not have the power to mar my work.

[*The curtains open on the other side of the bed from that near which Hecate stands.* HELEN *appears, pale and agitated. At the gesture of surprise and horror which Hecate makes on seeing her, Stanley turns his head.*

STANLEY.

Helen, thou there?

HELEN.

My father, I am here.

STANLEY.

What hast thou heard, child?

HELEN, *kneeling.*

Lay thy dying hand
In blessing on thy outcast daughter's head!

Forgive me, father, my unconscious crime,
As I forgive thee for my guilty birth!
Pardon thou all the years of toil and shame
Thy high-born child has borne for Helen's sake,
In prospect of the years of toil and shame
Thy slave-born daughter shall endure for hers!
For the defrauded Perdita shall find —
Justice? —

[*Rising.*

Is it, then, justice that appoints
Fate so diverse for children of one blood?
No! but, alike the fruit of wrong and crime,
We will divide our misery: the blight
That nipped the opening shoots of her young life
Shall wither mine in its full blossom. Father!
Mother! I do now take this burden on me
To bear with patience till my death! These pains,
Which I do willingly accept, may God
Impute to you in ransom of your crime!

STANLEY.

O God! Thus Helen ——

HELEN.

No! not thus, my father!
By all the lavish love that blessed my childhood,
The patient guidance lent my riper years,
Though they were granted to a name, a shadow,
And the poor changeling knows them not her own,
Yet, for the bliss that in those hours I tasted,

I bless thee still with a full daughter's heart!
And thou, my father, in this mortal hour,
Will not the vain distinctions of this earth
Release thy heart? Am I not still thy child?
Curse not the cheat that let me call thee father!
Grudge not thy daughter the dear memories
That to her future abject life shall be
As the tradition of a paradise
To fallen man, keeping alive her faith
In an eternal principle of good!
Once more, I pray thee, father, bless thy child!

[*Kneeling.*

STANLEY.

How shall I bless thee, Helen? With weak words?
I that have cursed thee even in giving thee life,
And leave thee now —— O God, it shall not be!
There is yet time! My brain is master still!
I will keep death at bay! — Go, call my brother!

[*To Hecate, who stands as if benumbed, her eyes fixed on Helen with a rigid stare.*

Hecate! hag! witch! fiend! demon! Hecate! go!
'T is for your child! Go! bring my brother hither! —

[*To Helen, tenderly.*

Thy hand in mine! Oh for one hour of life!
In vain! Death gripes me! God, thou gav'st me years
Enough to sin in, but to make amends
Deniest a moment! Helen! child! receive
The fruitless blessing of thy guilty father!

[*Dies.*

[*The curtain falls.*

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